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Bombay - Dec 1952

N AUTUMN TOUR IN WESTERN PERSIA

BY E. R. DURAND

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Preface

THIS book is nothing more than a sketch of an autumn tour in Western Persia. The reader will not find in it the smallest reference to political questions, and it does not pretend to give any new information of value about the country, which has been described by others, notably by that wonderful traveller, Mrs. Bishop. But the journey interested me greatly, and I hope that an account of it may perhaps have some interest for those who like to read stories of travel in the East.

I have to thank my husband and Mr. Ernest Rennie of the Diplomatic Service for much help given to me. I have borrowed freely from their road

PREFACE

journals, and Mr. Rennie also very kindly helped me with photographs and notes.

I wish also to thank Messrs. Sévroguine, of Tehran, for letting me use their photographs.

E. R. DURAND.

List of Illustrations

GATEWAY OF THE BRITISH LEGATION, TEHRAN . . .	<i>frontispiece</i>	
A BAKER'S SHOP IN THE TEHRAN BAZAAR . . .	<i>to face page</i>	12
THE HIZHABR UL MULK AND HIS MEN . . .	"	24
TEHRAN POLO GROUND. BEFORE A GAME . . .	"	31
OUR RACECOURSE AT GULHEK . . .	"	32
A PERSIAN DARVÍSH . . .	"	40
A TARANTASS . . .	"	46
THE GOLDEN DOME OF KUM, FROM THE DRY RIVER BED . . .	"	50
THE MAN WHO TOOK BAST WITH US . . .	"	54
A VALLEY NEAR GULHEK . . .	"	58
PERSIAN CULTIVATORS . . .	"	68
BIHISHTABAD—THE VILLAGE OF HEAVEN . . .	"	104
A BRIDGE IN THE BAKHTIARI COUNTRY . . .	"	118
A PIECE OF THE ROAD NEAR GODÁR . . .	"	128
CROSSING THE KARUN AT GODÁR I BALUTAK. . .	"	134
THE BRIDGE AT SHUSTER . . .	"	169
THE MILLS IN THE RIVER AT SHUSTER . . .	"	170
DANIEL'S TOMB, SUSA . . .	"	180
DEREKWAND CHIEFS . . .	"	192
KALA REZA AND THE KUH-I-KEBÍR . . .	<i>page</i>	198
BRIDGE OVER THE AB I ZAL . . .	"	203
PILLAR SHOWING THE PASSAGE OVER THE AB I ZAL . . .	"	205
THE PUL I TANG . . .	"	207
A BÉLÚT ACORN (LIFE SIZE) . . .	"	217
KHURRAMABAD. THE FORT . . .	<i>to face page</i>	224
A PERSIAN KURSI IN WINTER . . .	"	246
GARDEN AT ALIABAD . . .	"	262
THE KUM LAKE AND DEMAVEND . . .	<i>page</i>	262
MAP OF PERSIA SHOWING AUTHOR'S ROUTE		

9

ERRATUM.

Pp. 80 and 83. *For* Stewart (Bishop and Miss) *read* Stuart.

CHAPTER I

ON the afternoon of Tuesday, the 26th of September, 1899, we rode out of the picturesque gateway of the British Legation at Tehran for a long tour on horseback in Western Persia.

We had arranged to start the day before ; but, as is often the case in Persia, the muleteers or "chárvadars," who were to supply mules for our baggage, did not appear, and we had to wait for them. However, they were gradually hunted up from the bazaars, where they were enjoying themselves with the money we had advanced them, and we managed to make a start within twenty-four hours of the time fixed.

As we passed through the streets of the town on the way to the south gate we formed quite a large cavalcade. Not

AN AUTUMN TOUR

only had many English friends kindly come to see us off, but His Majesty the Shah had very graciously sent as our escort ten horsemen of his own body-guard, under a Sartip or Colonel. This gentleman, the Hizhabr ul Mulk, or Lion of the Country, took charge of us from the gate of the Legation, and his horsemen, sturdy Túrks from the north, looked very smart in their Hussar jackets and busbies, with scarlet pantaloons and long boots, their carbines slung across their backs in rough sheepskin cases. They cleared the way for us through the narrow bazaars, which were blocked by a multitude of camels and mules and donkeys, and of people on foot and on horseback. A tramway runs through the bazaars, and the very Western-looking car formed a curious contrast with its Eastern surroundings.

Having passed through the town, and arrived at the gate leading out to the south, we said good-bye to Mr. Spring Rice, Secretary of Legation, and other English friends, and set our faces to the



A BAKER'S SHOP IN THE TEHRAN BAZAAR.
From a Photograph by Sévrogue, Tehran.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

open country. We had before us a march of ten or twelve weeks, and, in order to let people shake into their places, we had decided to begin with a very short stage, so we had only four or five miles to go ; but it was after sunset when we cantered into our first camp near Rei, the ancient Rhages. Before we got there a little rain fell, an unusual thing at this time of year, and as we sat at dinner in our small dining tent we heard the patter on the canvas roof, which is always so unwelcome a sound in camp. We were very often to hear it again.

The objects of our journey were several. We wanted in the first place to pay a long promised visit to His Royal Highness the Zil es Sultan, brother of the Shah, and to see the old Persian capital of Ispahan. From Ispahan we wished to go on into the country of the Bakhtiari Lurs, to make the acquaintance of the tribal chiefs, and to see the new trade route which Messrs. Lynch Bros. were trying to open out through these wild mountains. After seeing this

AN AUTUMN TOUR

route we intended to go on across the Arab plains to Ahwaz, on the Karun River, one of the main openings through which British trade enters Persia. Finally, we wished to return to Tehran by way of Luristan, the country of the Feili Lur tribes, and to see whether there was any chance of opening up another trade route, often talked of, from the Karun to the North. Incidentally, we wanted also to visit the ruins of Susa, "Shushan the palace" of the Scriptures; and there was, I think, some idea of possibly getting a lion or two in the Arab country hard by, where lions still exist.

It will be seen from the accompanying map that this march involved crossing and recrossing the great mountain range which stretches from the Turkish frontier in a south-easterly direction towards the Persian Gulf. As this range runs up in points to a height of 13,000 feet, and there are no made roads, the travelling is rough.

Our party consisted of my husband, who was then British Minister in Persia, Mr. Rennie, Second Secretary in the Legation,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

a Persian writer, Yahia Khan, and myself, with our butler Buckpitt, once mess-corporal in the Bays, my maid Plummer, four mounted orderlies or Ghuláms, some twenty Persian servants, and as many mule-teers. We had with us about thirty horses and ninety mules, and our escort brought up the total to about seventy persons and a hundred and fifty horses and mules—a rather formidable number in any country where supplies were scanty ; but we had to carry tents and bulky presents, and it was necessary on a long march not to overload the animals, so we could not manage with less.

Presents, by the way, are very necessary in Persia. It is the custom of the country to exchange gifts, and no traveller should be without the means of sending something of equal or greater value in return for what is sent to him. The custom adds considerably to the cost of travelling.

The cháravadars were very noisy and quarrelsome during the night, as, indeed, they generally are ; and the mule bells, which are never removed, sounded

AN AUTUMN TOUR

incessantly, so that I remember I got little sleep. But the rain had passed off when we were called at sunrise next morning, and with a blue sky overhead we got up cheerfully to our first day's march.

CHAPTER II

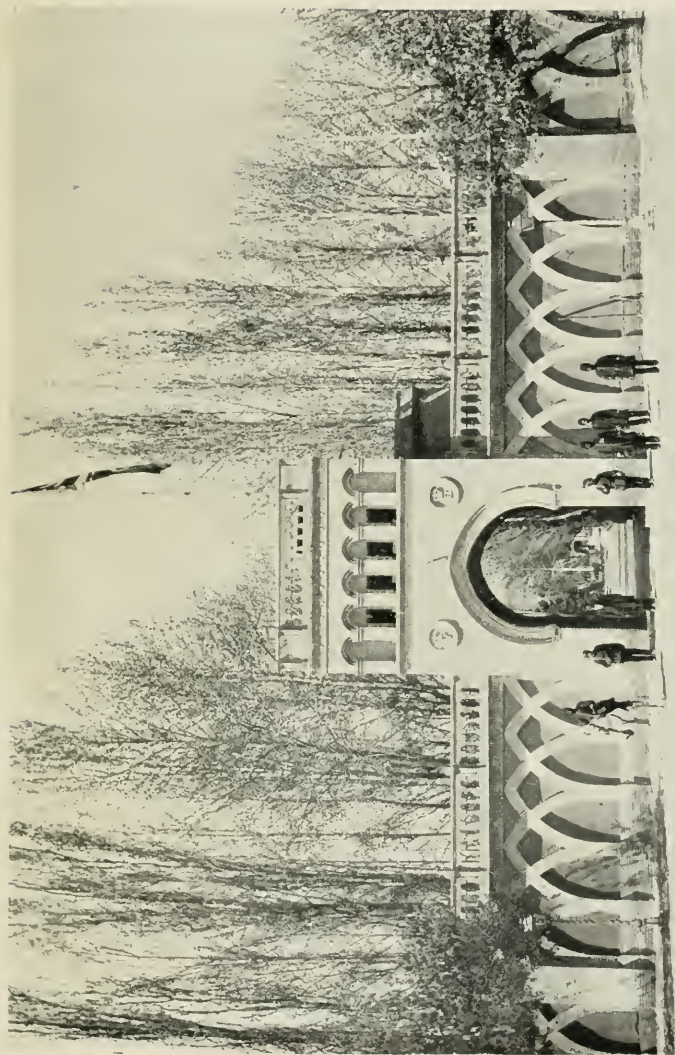
THE organization of a camp for a long march takes some trouble if all is to go right, and we were at work early in the morning to get the whole thing in order. Perhaps it will help to give a clear idea of travelling in Persia if I explain what the system is.

In the first place, to be comfortable, it is necessary to have a double set of tents and furniture, so that one set is on the march while the other is being used. In this way you can start in the early morning and finish the day's march by breakfast-time, finding a complete camp when you ride in, and having the rest of the day for whatever you want to do. The cook and some of the other servants go on at night, or very early in the morning, and get breakfast ready. The tents in which you have slept are struck when you start, and they

AN AUTUMN TOUR

make a double march, so as to be ready for you on the following day. A lightly loaded set of mules meanwhile start off and try to keep with you, or as near as possible, so as to bring up dressing-cases and other necessities which one wants every day and cannot well have in duplicate. A caravan thus becomes divided into three parties, which the Persians call respectively Píshkháneh (fore-house), Paskháneh (or hind-house), and Wasatkháneh (or middle-house).

On the morning of the 27th of September the mules were all ready loaded up and the division into "Khánehs" began. We took up our post at a narrow place between two irrigation cuts, where all had to pass ; and with infinite trouble—the mules breaking away, and the muleteers shouting and abusing one another, and running in all directions—we at last succeeded in telling off about forty mules carrying the Píshkháneh, who were to march on two stages. These were collected in the road, their muleteers with them, and the whole party handed over to one of our orderlies, Reza



GATEWAY OF THE BRITISH LEGATION, TEHRAN.

From a Photograph by Sévrouguine.

Sept. 1891

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Khan, in whose charge they were to be henceforward. I remember this man coming up in an excited way and demanding "in-sáf," justice. It appeared that one of the muleteers had loaded his mule, a fine powerful beast, with nothing but a tin hat-box. They were always trying these tricks. They used the most appalling language if detected, but they were amusing people.

When the Píshkháneh had started the Wasatkháneh was similarly selected and put under the charge of another orderly, Mo-hamed Ali, and they moved off. Then the Paskháneh was got together and handed over to a third orderly, Kuli Beg. When the road was quite clear we started ourselves and rode quietly to our next station, attended by a fourth orderly, Ali Akbar, the Mir Akhor or Master of the Horse.

Ali Akbar was the head of the twelve orderlies attached to the Legation, and a very important personage. These "Ghuláms," as they are called, carry the mail bags between Tehran and Constantinople and other places, and when in Tehran act as

AN AUTUMN TOUR

mounted orderlies. When on the road with despatches they ride practically day and night, and get through the worst country at the rate of about a hundred miles a day. They arrive sometimes after a six hundred mile ride from Shiraz or Meshed looking very tired and drawn, but they are wonderfully hardy, and after a day's rest they seem none the worse. They are not as a rule what we should call good riders, for the Persian seat is very loose, and it was funny to see them when first taken over jumps ; but one or two ride well, especially Ali Akbar, and having been to some extent drilled and trained, they look very smart with their bay horses and scarlet coats, which are their full-dress uniform. In undress they wear blue. In Persia bay horses are very rare, the prevailing colour being grey, which shows dust and dirt, and it took two or three years to get a dozen suitable bays together. Eventually they were got, chiefly Karabaghi horses from the Caucasus, with a beautiful metallic glint on their coats such as one sees only in the East.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

The organization of the Khánehs had taken some time, but we had not given the first many hours start, and it was useless to go fast. It was, I remember, a lovely day, with a cloudless blue sky, as the Persian sky generally is near Tehran, and the ground being flat and free from stones the short march was very pleasant. We were still in the centre of civilization, for the English Bank in Tehran has made a road through this country, and a telegraph line under English management runs along it. The Hizhabr ul Mulk, a nice cheery man of thirty-five or so, with a great fondness for horses and sport, was in high spirits at getting out of town and into open ground again. He seemed as happy as a schoolboy, and I remember his beginning the day by galloping his horse past two doves sitting on the telegraph wire and firing at them as he passed. This shooting at a gallop is a favourite form of sport with the Persians. The doves flew away, I was glad to see; but it looked very pretty, and the Hizhabr ul Mulk only laughed.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Hizhabr ul Mulk, by the way, was a northerner from the frontier province of Azarbaijan, and a sturdy Túrki, like his men. He spoke Persian to us, but his native language was Túrki.

He had, I remember, a charming expression for some of the birds we saw. He used to say to Mr. Rennie, "Why do you shoot that? That is a 'chíz i bi maní,'" a thing without meaning. The Persians generally, I think, regard snipe as a "chíz i bi maní." It is classed as a "gunjishk" or sparrow, and not worth powder and shot. But the snipe shot by the members of the Legation, especially the big "double snipe," nearly as large as a woodcock, used to be a great help to me in Tehran, where game is not plentiful.

There are a few quail to be got there, "bilderchín" the Persians call them, but they are very few. There is also a delicious little bird called a "tihi," a very small partridge, the Si Si of India, I think. There are also hill partridges and hares, the latter of which Persians do not eat. His Royal High-



THE HIZHABR UL MULK AND HIS MEN.

From a Photograph by Mr. Rennie.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

ness the Commander-in-Chief, knowing I was fond of animals, once sent me a pair of royal partridges from the mountains, splendid birds as big as pheasants. They became very tame and used to follow me about our garden, with a gentle chuckling cry. Alas ! they were both killed by dogs or cats.

Dinners were at times troublesome things in Tehran. There was so little variety. We had plenty of good mutton and lamb, and chickens, and Caspian salmon (which I thought horrid) and trout, and wild asparagus, but still the menu was circumscribed.

I think we all were as glad as the Hizhabr ul Mulk to get out on the march and away from the trammels of civilization.

Our butler, as I have said, was a cavalry man, and of course thoroughly at home on a horse. He afterwards left us to serve in South Africa. My maid was not accustomed to riding, but she said she did not suppose there was much art about it, and insisted upon going with us. I am afraid she had some rough days and found there was some

AN AUTUMN TOUR

art about it, but she did her marches most bravely, and got through to the end.

The Persian servants were a very useful set of men. There was a one-eyed cook, always keen and hard-working and ready to turn out a respectable meal under any conditions. There were three table servants or pishkhidmats, and three faráshes or house servants. These six had to pitch the tents too, with occasional assistance from villagers, under the guidance of an old man who had learnt camp work with the Afghan Boundary Commission fifteen years before. Then there was the waterman, a grumbling, hard-working old man with a mule, which carried big waterskins. And there were some grooms and others.

Persian servants are at their best in camp. In a house they are rough and slovenly, but this does not show so much on the march. They are born nomads, and love being away from town-life, and once they are under canvas it would be difficult to find more willing, hard-working people.



TEHRAN POLO GROUND. BEFORE A GAME.

From a Photograph by Sévrogine, Tehran.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Abdurrahman, the Indian groom or sais, was the head of the stable, with special charge of my husband's Australian horse, "Lancer," a big 16.2 bay, who had won several races in Tehran. For my riding I had another race-winner, a grey Arab, "Baghdádi," who could gallop beautifully, but had the Arab trick of stumbling at a walk. We had also brought with us four polo ponies to mount the servants.

Polo ponies in Persia are not so precious as in England. £15 will buy a very good one, with legs and feet like iron. Polo was a Persian game in old days. Now Persians do not play, but the English in Tehran have reintroduced the game, and play steadily for seven or eight months in the year. The Shah has very kindly allowed them to use the great parade ground in the town. It is rather hard, without any grass, but makes a fine polo ground.

Mr. Rennie had a long bay Turkoman, "Turpin," like a weedy English thoroughbred, which is the true Turkoman type, and some more polo ponies. The

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Persian writer and orderlies had horses from our Ghulám kháneh or Government stables. The muleteers walked, occasionally resting themselves by bestriding a poor little donkey, their legs nearly touching the ground. With their brown bowl-shaped felt caps, long blue coats, pleated at the waist, and legs bound up with bandages, they looked very sturdy and picturesque. They would walk thirty miles if necessary day after day, grumbling and quarrelling a good deal, and eating enormously of lamb and fruit and unleavened bread, but never seeming tired.

Speaking of Turkoman horses, people have, I think, a very mistaken notion about them. They are said to be ugly. Some are ugly no doubt—without manes practically, and with little hair on their tails, and apt to be flat-sided and ewe-necked; their heads, too, are often rather coarse. But some are beautiful creatures, and not only very enduring but very fast. One silver grey Turkoman I had, “Rupée,” was the fastest and easiest horse I ever rode. His



OUR RACECOURSE AT GULHEK.
From a Photograph by Sévrouine, Tehran.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

gallop was perfection, and he won several races, in fact he always won if he could be got to start. He had a dreadful temper at times, when ridden by a man, and became unmanageable if touched with a whip, but he was always quite gentle with me. They are often over sixteen hands high—with a great look of blood—more like English thoroughbreds than any horses I have seen, but with much harder legs and feet. Their feet are very small indeed. Some of them jump very well.

Last and least of our caravan was my dog "Roughie," a little silver-haired Yorkshire terrier, who had been my constant friend since we bought him in England, ten years before, in pity for his frightened ways and pleading brown eyes. Anything less "rough" it would have been difficult to find, but that was his name when we got him, and we did not change it. In 1899 Roughie was too old and frail to run the marches. He had been twice out to India and twice to Persia, and age was beginning to tell on him. So we made for him a

AN AUTUMN TOUR

leather bag or sling in which he could lie with his head and forelegs out at one end and his hind legs out at the other. One of us used to take up the sling and strap it over his shoulder, and there Roughie would sit quite comfortable, his forepaws on the rider's knee, barking at sheep and goats and other natural enemies, and enjoying himself thoroughly. You had to hold him with your left hand at a canter to prevent him from bumping, but this soon came easy. After a few days he used to wag his tail and dance round his sling when it was produced, anxious only to be off. Sometimes Mr. Rennie or one of the others would kindly help us—a great relief, for riding with a weight slung over your shoulder, even if it is only ten pounds, gets very irksome after an hour or two. Some of the horses got fidgety at feeling Roughie's hind paws on them, notably my husband's favourite polo pony Jeddah, who always resented the indignity and kicked. Lancer took it quite quietly, and Roughie seemed to like his long easy canter.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Rafih in Persian means “exalted,” and he was generally called Rafih or Rafih Khan, in derision I fear, by our servants.

Persians are very fond of small pet dogs —“túlis” as they call them—and it is almost as difficult to keep a pet dog in Tehran as in London. If you let him get out of your sight he is stolen. We lost Roughie once. Perhaps as an illustration of Persian life I may tell the story.

We had been out for a walk in the evening, and just before getting home, in the gloaming, we missed the little dog. The gentlemen went out searching for him in the lonely roads about the Legation, but without success, and about nine o'clock they gave it up and came in to dinner. For a week we heard nothing of him, though we offered a large reward and did all we could to find him.

Then one day the “seraidar,” the man who has charge of the Legation buildings, was at work on a wall when a passer-by said to him : “The little dog is in So-and-so's house in the town. I have seen him.”

AN AUTUMN TOUR

The seraidar went off at once and knocked at the door of the house. The owner of the house, a Sartip or Colonel, was out, but one of his people came and assured the seraidar that he was quite mistaken, there was no dog in the house. Something made the seraidar suspicious, so he said, "All right, brother, but it is sunset, and I must say my evening prayers. May I say them here?" The "brother" agreed, and was asked for a prayer carpet. He went away to get one, and the seraidar took out a gold coin and said to a small boy standing in the courtyard, "You can have that if you tell me where the dog is." The boy pointed to a door and the seraidar opened it, when out came Roughie.

When the man returned with the prayer carpet there was a scene, but he declared the dog was one he had had for years, and his name was "Bob." The seraidar said, "Very well, you call him and I will call him, and we will see." They tried, and of course Roughie answered to his name. Then the "brother" confessed he had

AN AUTUMN TOUR

said what was not true, and with good-humoured resignation told how Roughie had come into their hands.

Apparently the little dog stayed behind us at a quiet corner and was surrounded by pariah dogs, who were ill-treating him. Two nice kind Persian workmen who were passing saw him, and one said to the other, "Let us save this creature of God." So they drove off the pariahs and rescued Roughie.

Then they did not know what to do with him, so they walked through the bazaar carrying him and calling out, "Who will buy a young lamb?" People laughed, and the Colonel came to see what was the matter. When he saw Roughie he bought him for three krans, or fifteenpence.

I remember his return so well. The "Nawab," Hassan Ali Khan, Oriental Secretary in the Legation, who told us the story, brought him into the drawing-room one evening when I had visitors. The tears were pouring down the little dog's face, and my two great St. Bernards, Rex

AN AUTUMN TOUR

and Dido, who were very fond of him, were jumping up in great excitement round him.

Dear dogs—they were both magnificent creatures—children respectively of Lord Bute and Young Plinlimmon, and the people used to call them the “Khánúm’s lions.” They both died in Persia. But I am wandering away from the account of our tour.

I will only add that for days after Roughie’s return the dervíshes or beggars all round the Legation used to meet us with the cry, “Alhamd ul illah,” “The little dog is found.”

During our first day’s march we passed the mosque of Shah Abdul Azím, a noted place of pilgrimage, where the late Shah Nasr ed dín was murdered by an anarchist six years ago. His Majesty refused to let the mosque be cleared when he came in to say his prayers, and passed through the people, when a man, who was kneeling on the floor, put up a pistol and shot him through the heart. The Shah was close upon his Jubilee, and the invitations to the festivities were out. Passing the mosque reminded



A PERSIAN DARVÍSH.

From a Photograph by Sévroguine, Tehran.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

me vividly of the fine old King, who had always been kind and gracious to me.

I remember going to a Persian ladies' party once, at which His Majesty was present. Before leaving the room the Shah gave to each of the Persian ladies a gold coin or ashrafi, as was his custom. When he came to where I was standing he hesitated a second and then said, "You will not mind taking this, I hope—it is my picture—for a remembrance of me." I thought it was a pretty way of putting the thing.

The only railway line in Persia, six or seven miles long, runs between Tehran and Shah Abdul Azím. It carries pilgrims to the mosque, and stone from a quarry close by in a wild mountain gorge. On the other side of this gorge the Guebrs or fire-worshippers have their Tower of Silence, in which the dead are exposed to be devoured by vultures. Such a desolate place it is. From Tehran one can see the tower as a white speck on the rocky hillside.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

There are a good many Guebrs in Tehran, mostly, I believe, gardeners, and there are several thousands in other parts of Persia. They seem to be quiet hard-working people, but without the push of their emigrant kinsmen the Parsis of India.

CHAPTER III

ONCE we had organized our camp and got everything into working order the march went on regularly and easily enough.

For the first hundred miles, as far as the holy city of Kum, we had an actual road, over which the English Bank runs carriages. It is not quite what we should call a road in England, being unmetalled and very muddy in bad weather ; but strongly built carts and carriages can go along it, and we met several, mostly rough “tarantass” carts drawn by three or four horses abreast. They go very slowly, rarely getting out of a walk, except downhill, when the cart at times runs away with the horses ; but still they do go.

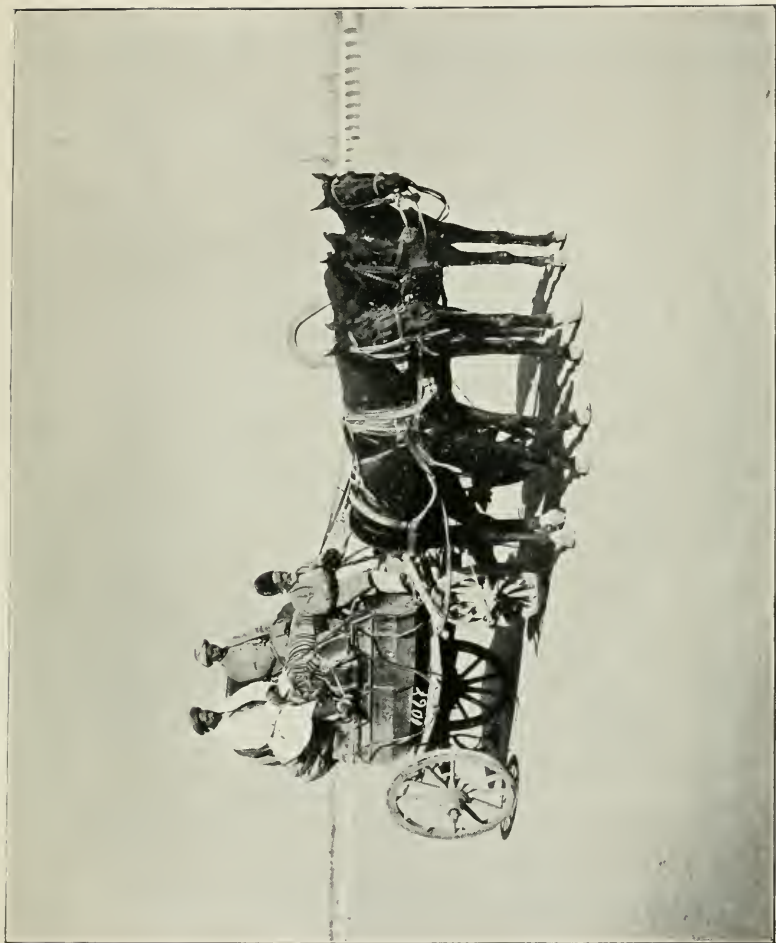
In the opposite direction, going with us towards the holy city of Kum, were a few more carts, and many mule caravans. On

AN AUTUMN TOUR

some of the mules were long wooden boxes or cloth bundles, corpses going to be buried near the sacred shrine. Others carried kejavahs, or wooden panniers, in which sat men and women and children, pilgrims on their way to Kerbela.

But the main road to Ispahan has been so well and so often described by other travellers that I need not say much about it. It lies along the western edge of the immense central desert which stretches away for hundreds of miles towards Afghanistan.

We used to be called at daybreak and be dressed half an hour later, coming out to see the long line of the Elburz range to the north, clear and sharp in the morning light, with the great white cone of Demavend 19,000 feet high, towering above the other peaks. Then the Wasatkháneh with our daily needs was rapidly got ready and sent off, while we drank our tea at a little table in the open and ate something, generally boiled eggs, put into their cups narrow end up. An Oriental always does things exactly in the opposite way to a



A TARANTASS.
From a Photograph by Sévrogine, Tehran.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

European. Very often I think the Oriental is right, and sets us a good example, but eggs narrow end up seem uncanny. I never could get my servants to see this.

Soon after sunrise we used to be in the saddle. The marches varied from sixteen to thirty miles, but as the ground was good we generally got over our march in time for breakfast at about ten o'clock, sometimes earlier. We then had a few quiet hours, rather hot at times, for writing, reading, receiving and paying visits, or whatever one had to do, and then afternoon tea. After this we took a quiet walk, or if there was game within reach the sportsmen of the party would take their guns and go off to shoot snipe or partridges or duck, and get some exercise before dinner. Soon after dark we dined, and by 9.30 or thereabouts we were all asleep, lulled to rest by the ceaseless murmur of the mule-bells, which, though disturbing at first, soon comes to sound friendly and cheerful.

Somewhere on the road, I cannot remember exactly where, we came upon a

AN AUTUMN TOUR

cart upon which had been loaded a block of stone intended for the Shah's tomb. The wheels of the cart had ploughed deep into the soft road, and the poor beasts that drew it were struggling painfully to make it move. When we returned, more than two months later, the cart had moved only a few miles. It was an illustration of the difficulty of transport in a great country like Persia where there are no railways.

When we got within sight of the golden dome of Kum, which can be seen from high ground many miles away, the Hizhabr ul Mulk galloped off a few yards to the side of the road, where he dismounted and reverently said his prayers. The men of the escort followed his example, prostrating themselves on the ground in adoration of the sacred shrine. Then we rode on.

It is pleasant to see the open, unaffected way in which Persians say their prayers. I often noticed the labourers in the fields, striking figures in their long blue coats, standing or kneeling at their devotions against the sunset sky.



THE GOLDEN DOME OF KUM.

From the dry river bed.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

At Kum we gave the servants a day's halt to visit the shrine and get a rest and a bath, both of which they sorely needed.

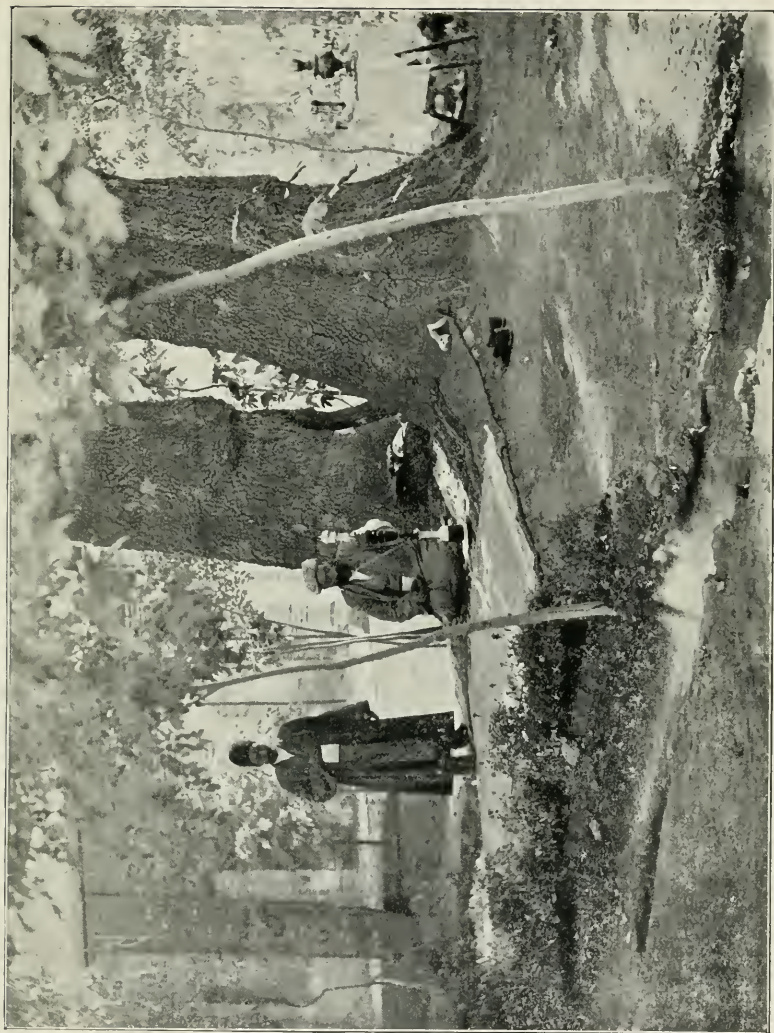
Kum is a sad-looking place, chiefly "kharábát" ruins. The mosque on the river, with its golden dome and high minarets, is picturesque, though not, I think, well proportioned. Round it is an enclosure where numberless dead are buried yearly. This enclosure is very holy indeed, as the burial place of Fatma, sister of Reza, the eighth Imám, who is buried at Meshed. The modern city is miserable, a few dirty streets and bazaars, the houses built almost entirely of mud, and nothing at all to see. No wine is to be bought here, as the Mullahs forbid it.

Kum is a favourite place of sanctuary or "bast," as the Persians call it. It would be terrible sacrilege to injure any one who had taken refuge there. This custom of taking bast has curious developments in Persia. Men who had a grievance used often to take bast under the British flag in the Legation garden, and it was

AN AUTUMN TOUR

contrary to the custom of the country to turn them out. Sometimes they remained for weeks. One man I remember came to our summer Legation at Gulhek. He was the agent of some merchants who had a claim against the Persian Government, and he could not get his money. We found him one evening with a servant and various carpets and cooking arrangements, installed under the flagstaff in the main drive. This was inconvenient, so he was persuaded to remove to a shady spot under a big plane tree, where he remained for four months. There is no rain during the summer, and he was very comfortable. He planted a little garden of marigolds near a rivulet which flowed past his tree, perhaps to show that he had come to stay, and he used to entertain any members of the Legation who passed by with anecdotes and cups of tea.

Eventually his claim was settled, and he then represented that as he had been under the British flag so long it would be fitting if the British Government gave him a decoration and the title of Protector of the



THE MAN WHO TOOK BAST WITH US.

From a Photograph by Sévrouguine, Tehran.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

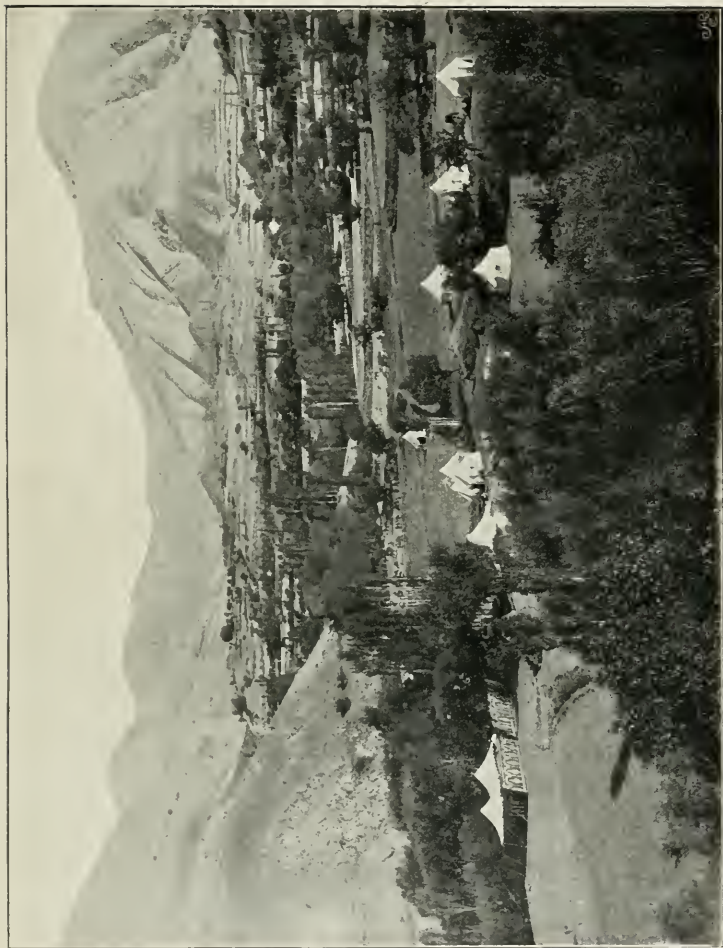
Merchants ! The same request was made to the Persian Prime Minister, or Sadr i Azam, who, I believe, good-naturedly conferred upon the man a khilat or robe of honour.

The Legation garden at Gulhek, six miles from Tehran, is a large shady enclosure, with avenues of planes and other trees, watered by a stream of deliciously cold water from the mountains just above us. The garden at Tehran was almost as pleasant. Every kind of English flower could be grown, and the natural flowers were beautiful. Almost before the snow was over, the little channels or "júbs " by which the water was distributed were lined with violets, which made the whole air sweet. Then as spring advanced came in their place hundreds of white iris, and after them a blaze of tiger lilies. Last of all came the roses, and with them the nightingales. By the end of May, when we moved up to Gulhek, the Tehran garden was so delightful that it went to my heart to leave it, and the nightingales used to sing all the evening and night. But one

AN AUTUMN TOUR

went to the same thing six miles away among the cornfields and orchards at the foot of the mountains, a green fan of cultivation surrounded by the stony desert. In this district, Shimran, the Shah and the Persian nobles and the Foreign Legations generally spend the summer, or a part of it. The late Shah used to leave Tehran about the end of May, when the heat began, and move slowly up, a mile or two at a time, from one of his beautiful garden houses to another, until finally in the end of July he would march away over the mountains to a cool place on the north side of the range, where patches of snow lie all the year round. With him went several hundreds of people, and innumerable horses and mules, so that the camp was of imposing size.

I found it hard at first to get my gardeners to make raised flower beds and water them properly. Their way was to have sunk beds, which they flooded by turning on a stream from the main channel. The sodden ground then baked and cracked



A VALLEY NEAR GULISTAN.
From a Photograph by Sévrogue, Tehran.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

under the hot Persian sun, and nothing but the hardiest flowers, chiefly petunias, would grow in the mud and stones. However, the gardeners were very good, and soon took to our ways, and we got the most beautiful pansies and hyacinths and other flowers from fresh English and French seed.

The water for the gardens was brought from the mountain sides in underground water channels or "kanáts," and the whole country round Tehran is streaked with long lines of flat-topped mounds, the mouths of the air shafts connecting the kanát with the surface. Men are always at work keeping the kanáts open and clear, and the earth and weed which they haul up with a rough windlass is thrown out round the shaft. Some of the shafts are very deep, two or three hundred feet at the highest point of the kanát on the mountain side, and the kanát men or moghanis have at times a very dangerous life.

Their underground quarters are cool in summer. A Persian gentleman told me he once had reason to think his mog-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

hanis were not working, so he went down a shaft to see. He found they had hollowed out a charming room just above the water, and were playing cards in comfort.

Colonies of pigeons are at times to be found in the shafts, and hunted hares or foxes always make straight for the nearest line of kanát, where they go to earth in the mounds. Fish and water snakes live in the streams below, and once I was given a young otter which had been caught in a kanát.

I believe the great heat of the sun causes such rapid evaporation of surface water that these underground channels are a necessity.

While we were at Kum we received news that war in the Transvaal was likely, and the Persians were much interested in it.

After Kum there is no road in our sense of the word. There is, however, a track along the foot of a range of hills to Kashan, and some "chaparkhánehs" or post houses on the way. Dreadful places they are most of them, with no accommodation and doubtful water, and very little in the way

AN AUTUMN TOUR

of supplies. But our servants always said the same thing of each of the halting places, "Hama chiz darad," "It has everything." We found this meant a certain amount of bread, and fodder for the animals, and water kept in an underground "abam-bar" or cistern. A Persian post house is almost invariably a square walled enclosure entered by one gateway. The camels and other animals occupy the centre of the enclosure. On the inside of the wall are some rooms or alcoves where men can sleep, and there are two or three rooms over the gateway to which one climbs by a steep stair. Travellers ride from chaparkhaneh to chaparkhaneh on ponies kept for the purpose at each stage. The track is sometimes over good ground where one can get a canter ; sometimes it lies through a wilderness of stones, where one can only go at a foot's pace, a very wearisome thing when one has twenty or thirty miles to go with a blazing sun overhead.

On this road, and indeed all about Tehran, one often sees the mirage, and it

AN AUTUMN TOUR

is really impossible to believe sometimes that one is not gazing at lines of trees, and beautiful lakes or rivers. But it is only a picture, and if one is out soon after sunrise one can see the picture forming.

Kashan was formerly a great town, famous for its tile work and other manufactures, but it is now chiefly kharábát, like Kum, and one was saddened by riding through miles of crumbling walls and houses and gardens. I could not help thinking of a pamphlet I had been reading about the terrible overcrowding in England, called, I think, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*. Every family in Kashan could have ground enough for a palace, and as much blue sky and open air as man could wish for.

Five or six miles from Kashan is a beautiful garden—Fin—and close to it a spring of exquisitely clear water gushes from the hillside. The water is caught in a large pond or reservoir about four feet deep, in which are numbers of fish. So transparent is the water that at the bottom of

AN AUTUMN TOUR

it one can see almost every scale, and it is interesting to sit and watch the fish feeding and playing and chasing one another. The water, notwithstanding its clearness, is said to be unwholesome from containing too much sulphur.

After Kashan we struck across the hills we had been skirting. Most of the first day's march was barren and bare—a hot stony glacis; but at a place called Kuhrúd, about 7,000 feet above the sea, we came upon a beautiful valley, full of fruit trees and walnuts and poplars and planes. They were just touched with autumn colouring. There is a considerable export of fruit and potatoes from this place to Ispahan, and even, I was told, to Tehran. With its green crops and trees the valley looked very fresh and inviting after the stony plain about Kashan. Kuhrúd is a populous place, containing about 650 houses in its two connected villages. So at least the Kedkhuda or village headman told us. He also told us that for six months in the year the valley was under snow.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

I saw here what I had never seen before, graves carved out of the solid rock, with inscriptions cut upon the stone at the foot or head. The village dead are all apparently buried in these rock sepulchres, and, as they take some time to make ready, two or three are always prepared in advance. The villagers showed us the empty graves, waiting for their occupants.

Over this village, on a hillock, is a tower from which it was the custom to watch for Bakhtiari raiders, who often appeared here. As late as four years before, when the Shah was murdered, this tower was manned night and day. We could well believe that it was necessary, for the hills all around are very wild. The next night gave us a curious lesson on the subject, for a few miles further on our pishkháneh, which was marching through the night, was "held up" by Bakhtiaris. They shouted and fired a few shots from the hillside, and then descended to loot the caravan. Happily the orderly in charge kept cool, and while the rest of the servants were sobbing with

AN AUTUMN TOUR

terror, he explained to the Bakhtiaris that the mules belonged to the British Minister. They at once apologised and drew off, requesting the orderly to explain to the "Vezír Mukhtar" that they were very sorry to have given so much trouble, but that they did not know the caravan was his. It was really very civil of them.

But that is the way in Persia. Robbers are quite open to reason. Some years ago one of the Legation orderlies, coming up from Shiraz with mails, was shot at by robbers and wounded. They ordered him to give up all that he had with him. He was forced to do it, but pointed out that he was carrying some English despatches, and also a hat for a gentleman in Tehran, which he said would be of no use to them. They immediately agreed, and restored both hat and despatches, carrying off, however, everything of value. By which words I mean no disrespect to the Foreign Office. On another occasion an Englishman, belonging to the bank in Tehran, was attacked by robbers, and also ordered to give up all his

AN AUTUMN TOUR

property. They searched his boxes, but gave back to him everything for which they had no use. For example, his collars, which, I believe, they tried on and found uncomfortable, also his frock coat, which, I suppose, they considered a “chíz i bi maní,” or thing without meaning, as it was not pleated in the skirt like their own garments.

Every Persian, rich and poor, wears this pleated frock coat. You even see the labourers in the fields working in it, and boys of three or four years old wear it just the same as their elders. It is really an overcoat, several other garments being worn under it. With the tall lambskin “kulah” on their heads the town Persians get very close to modern English costume, only the skirt of the frock coat is more like a kilt, and the kulah is always tilted backwards. The labourers generally wear a round brown felt cap instead of a kulah. The kulah has no brim, but the Persians sometimes tie a piece of string round it with a movable peak, which is shifted according to the sun.



PERSIAN CULTIVATORS.

From a Photograph by Sévroguine, Tehran.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

At Kuhrúd, where we halted a day, we had our first touch of frost, and one of our muleteers fell ill. We thought he had simply got a chill and a little fever, and treated him accordingly, but he seemed to get no better, and it was explained to us that he had gone mad from eating too many melons. I never heard of this form of madness before, and it made us think of the poet Campbell in Algiers, but the poor man was really very ill and delirious for some time. He did not rejoin us for weeks.

The amount of melons our men used to eat was something astonishing. Kum and Kashan are famous for them, and one could buy a beautiful big oval melon a foot or more long for a penny or twopence. Some were quite delicious in flavour, and very cold. On our long hot marches among the stones the Hizhabr ul Mulk and the others often comforted themselves with a slice or two, and one could see the servants at breakfast time sitting down to a whole melon apiece with a couple of square feet of flat bread. It was "colossal," as the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Germans say. The horses too were passionately fond of them and would eat any quantity they could get. They regularly got all the rind, and devoured it greedily.

Persia is a wonderful country for fruit. Grapes, peaches, pears, apples, everything seems to grow naturally. But little is done to improve the trees, and one never gets anything like an English hothouse peach or English grapes.

So we went on to Ispahan, where we arrived on the 12th of October. A couple of marches out we had been met by the Prince Governor's head man, the Fatih ul Mulk, a very polite and agreeable gentleman, who brought out some carriages for us, and gave us altogether the most kindly and hospitable reception. The Zil es Sultan, or Shadow of the King, is the brother of the Shah and governor of the province. To the surprise of the deputation we preferred riding, and did not avail ourselves of the carriages until it came to entering the streets of Ispahan itself; but then I must say I was very thankful for a seat in one of

AN AUTUMN TOUR

them. I should not have cared to ride through the narrow covered bazaars among the crowds of men and animals. My husband rode in and was treated with much honour. The Zil es Sultan sent out one of his favourite horses for the "Vezír Mukhtar," a grey Arab with a long tail dyed crimson, as is the custom with royal horses in Persia. The saddle was of green velvet, with the Persian Lion and Sun embroidered in gold upon it.

The Lion and Sun meets the eye at every turn in Persia. I am told the Sun was the old emblem of the fire worshippers. When they became Mahomedans the Lion was added because Ali was called the Lion of God. A Persian noble told me that the woman's face in the sun was added by one of the Persian kings as a memorial of a favourite wife.

I was glad when this part of the march was at an end. We had had a good deal of cloudy weather and a few drops of rain, but we had also had considerable heat and were much burnt, particularly about the eyes.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

It is difficult in Persia to hit off the time for an extended tour. One is burnt or frozen if one starts a little too early or too late in the year ; and even in a day and night one can be both, for on the coldest winter day the Persian sun is very hot. In Tehran, where the wings of the Legation point to the north, and shelter the front of the house, we used to have all through the winter a strip of ground frozen hard, and big heaps of snow to right and left. The sun never fell on them. A few yards away, in the sun, it was too hot to sit and read. It is in many respects a lovely climate, sunny and clear beyond everything I have seen. Even after a fall of snow the sky is generally cloudless in a few hours, and the snow lies glittering like diamonds. In 1900 it lay for more than two months, and we used to go out for long rides across a white silent plain. The air is extraordinarily transparent, and one can see to a great distance. But the dryness and altitude are trying to the nerves, and many Europeans break down, women especially.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

One year, in the beginning of 1895, we had skating in the open. The ice was more than a foot thick and like a deep green mirror. When we began, before the ice got cut up, you saw the reflections of the skaters gliding about under them. Generally the sun is too hot to let ice form in the open, but any year one could get skating in the shade. The Persians are very fond of ice in the summer, and to get it they build what they call "yakhchals." These are long walls thirty or forty feet high, facing south. On the north side is dug a shallow trench, perhaps ten yards broad, and this is filled with water, which getting no sun freezes hard. Every fortnight or so the ice is broken up, and stored in pits under the wall. By hiring a yakhchal for the winter it is possible to keep very fair ice.

We were told in 1895 that there had not been skating in the open for thirty years. A Persian nobleman, who gave me an account of it, said the late Shah was then much amused by the "ice play" of

AN AUTUMN TOUR

the Europeans, and insisted upon several of his ministers putting on skates, which were readily lent, with results which may be imagined.

I remember that one day in 1895 when we were skating on beautiful ice, with snow lying all round us, the thermometer in the sun stood at ninety degrees.

But I must return to Ispahan.

Lord Curzon had most kindly sent the Legation an outfit of tents from India, and these had been pitched by Captain Schneider, the acting Consul, in a large walled enclosure, the Túpkháneh, placed at our disposal by the Prince. It was very pleasant to find oneself in a really good tent again, with everything comfortable around one, and two or three days' rest to look forward to. In our marching camp the tents had been poor, as the Tehran Legation had no camp equipment for journeys. The standing camp at Ispahan, with its fine white new tents and lofty flag-staff, looked quite imposing, and people came in numbers to see it.

CHAPTER IV

WE remained in Ispahan from Thursday to Monday, and here we heard of the outbreak of war in South Africa, and that our son's regiment, the 9th Lancers, was ordered to the front. For his sake we were glad, but it made one long to be within reach of news during the next few months, instead of being far away from posts and telegrams.

In other respects our stay in Ispahan was very agreeable. On the day of our arrival I had complete peace, except for the wasps and hornets, which were very troublesome. The Prince Governor had sent us on arrival a great number of trays of fruit and sweetmeats, and possibly these attracted the creatures, but in any cases they were in thousands. We organized driving parties armed with towels and napkins, and by moving up in line to an open door at one

AN AUTUMN TOUR

end of the big dining tent we used to drive out a buzzing angry swarm, and drop a hanging mat behind them. Then for a few minutes the land had rest, but they soon began to gather again, coming from I don't know where, and one's comfort was at an end. At last we gave it up, and the gentlemen began to take the infliction philosophically. They got up a sweepstakes, the first person stung to win. Oddly enough, though they had wasps and hornets crawling over them in scores, no one was stung so long as we remained in Ispahan.

The day after our arrival in Ispahan the English community came to call upon us, and we had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of all the resident merchants and missionaries and their wives, an English population of more than twenty.

In the middle of the afternoon His Royal Highness the Prince Governor, on whom my husband had called the evening before, came to return the visit. He was exceedingly pleasant, and sat some time in our reception tent talking and laughing merrily.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

His Royal Highness was very like his father the late Shah. The Prince has several sons, nice clever boys with very good manners, who speak English and French. They have an English tutor, Mr. Swift, once, I believe, an officer in the artillery, with whom they seem very happy.

That evening the Russian Consul and his secretary, Mr. Litkin, dined with us, and we spent a very pleasant evening. I have never had more agreeable guests or hosts than the various members of the Russian diplomatic and consular services whom I have met, and Prince Dabija and Mr. Litkin were no exception to the rule. We said good-night to them with regret.

The next day there was much official visiting, with which I had nothing to do, but in the evening we went out for a ride. Passing down the beautiful but ruined Chaharbagh, the great boulevard of Ispahan, with its four rows of lofty plane trees, now, alas ! showing great gaps, we crossed the river by a fine stone bridge and visited the old palaces on the further bank. It

AN AUTUMN TOUR

was a melancholy sight. The palaces are minutely described by Curzon, and I can add nothing to his description except that they are even more hopelessly ruined than when he wrote. "Kharáb Shud," "It is ruined," is what you hear of almost every old building in Persia.

On my return in the evening all the Englishmen in Ispahan came to dinner. They were headed by Bishop Stewart, whom I had known in India as a girl, when he was minister of the Presbyterian Church in Calcutta. His energy is great, and I have lately heard of him travelling in New Zealand.

On the Sunday we went over to Julfa, the Armenian suburb of Ispahan, on the other side of the river, where the English mission has its chapel and hospital buildings. The mission consists of Bishop Stewart and his sister, Miss Stewart, the Rev. Mr. Stileman and Mrs. Stileman, and several others. There is a hospital, which when I saw it was entirely under the management of English ladies. We were much

AN AUTUMN TOUR

struck with the happy look of the women in the hospital, and with the cheerful capable ways of the ladies who had devoted their lives to working among the poor of Julfa.

The work and surroundings of the mission have been described at some length by Mrs. Bishop in her *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan*.

In Tehran the American missionaries and the American hospital occupy the field, and nobly they do their work. At that place, the capital of Persia, where we have a large Legation and something like a hundred British subjects, we are entirely dependent upon the American Presbyterian mission. With the broad-minded tolerant common sense which seems to characterize American missionaries all the world over, the Presbyterian ministers in Tehran give the English community an English Church Service every Sunday, and to them we are indebted for all religious offices. They christen our children, and marry our young men and maidens, and comfort our sick,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

and read the burial service over our dead, and lay them to rest in the desolate cemetery out on the stony plain. Six years ago, when England and America were or seemed to be on the brink of war on account of Venezuela, we used to meet every Sunday morning in the American mission chapel, and there Americans and Englishmen knelt side by side and prayed for "the most gracious Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria and the President of the United States." We were all together at Tehran, all the English-speaking people, and I shall never as long as I live forget the kindness we met with from our American friends.

In Ispahan we found that instead of Americans the missionaries were English, and we were glad to meet them and to feel that England has not left the Persian mission field entirely to others, kinsmen though they be.

The Ispahan missionaries have not an easy task, and they have to exercise considerable patience and tact. The populace of the town is excitable, and inclined at

AN AUTUMN TOUR

times to give our people much trouble. On the whole however the mission generally manages to get on without serious obstruction, and so long as it has at its head a man as wise and patient as Bishop Stewart it will probably continue to do so.

The merchants have difficulties too, and I was told that owing to bad harvests and the troubles consequent on the late Shah's death, trade had been bad of late years ; but the English merchants do not seem to be at all afraid of foreign competition, which is satisfactory.

Ispahan, the old capital, is a sad place to see. It is a city of ruins, ruined palaces with crumbling walls and broken carvings and faded frescos, ruined mosques with bold beautiful tile-work clinging in patches to the crumbling domes, ruined bridges spanning the broad bed of the nearly dry river, ruined gardens and avenues and squares, ruins, ruins, ruins, everywhere ruins. Alas for the beauty and splendour that has been !

Some day perhaps they will be again, for the country might be a paradise.

CHAPTER V

ON the 16th of October we left Ispahan for the Bakhtiari hills.

One of the four main objects of our journey had been accomplished. We had visited Ispahan, and paid our respects to the Zil es Sultan, and met all the merchants and missionaries at this important centre. We had also made the acquaintance of Captain Schneider and of the very kind and helpful British agent, Dr. Aganoor, who is an Armenian. We were now to set out on our second object, the visiting of the Bakhtiari chiefs, and the inspection of the new trade route through their rugged highlands.

As at Tehran, when the time came to start, the muleteers were missing, and we had some trouble in getting them together, but this did not delay us long. Captain Schneider, whose powers of organization

AN AUTUMN TOUR

had made our stay in Ispahan so comfortable and pleasant, came to our rescue, and we were soon on the road. It was a lovely day when we started, and tired as I had been when we arrived at Ispahan I was glad to be in the saddle again. We rode out escorted by a deputation from the Prince Governor, and by a considerable number of the English community. The "Vezír Mukhtar" was again mounted on one of His Royal Highness's horses. The Prince is a great lover of horses, and collects them from all parts of the country. Some of his Arabs and Bakhtiaris are very good.

The Bakhtiari horses, by the way, are often beyond price. Of pure Arab race, many of them, but bred in the mountains and accustomed to the roughest ground from their birth, they are as hardy as they are beautiful, and it is quite extraordinary to see the way they will carry their riders over rocks and stones. They scarcely ever make a mistake, and their legs seem to be as hard as steel.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

When we parted from our friends three or four miles out of Julfa we broke into a canter and pushed on to our first camping place, Pul i Wargun, on the banks of the Zainda River, the same river which washes the bridges of Ispahan. We had left behind in Ispahan most of our big tents, which were too heavy to carry in mountainous country, and after eating our dinner in a building belonging to the Prince, overhanging the river, we went to sleep for the first time in our miniature camp of Kabul tents, each tent seven feet square, with a tiny semicircular dressing room at the back. These had also been presented to the Legation by Lord Curzon's Government.

For one person these Kabul tents are comfortable enough. One can stand up straight in the very middle of them, and by putting away one's camp bed under the sloping roof at the side one has room to write and dress and move about. But there is not too much room.

That little camp was to shelter us for

AN AUTUMN TOUR

two months, and we came to look upon it as our home. In the centre of the line was a small square "shamiána," or flat-topped fair-weather tent, just big enough for four people to dine in at a small square table. To right and left of the shamiána were Kabul tents, four in all, for ourselves and Mr. Rennie and my maid. Beyond the Kabul tents, at each end of the line, was a somewhat similar tent, one for the Persian writer and one for the butler. In front of the shamiána was a small flagstaff flying the Union Jack in the day time and a hanging lantern at night. Behind our line of tents, if we had room, if not elsewhere, were the tents of the orderlies and servants. The muleteers had no tents. They are hardy people and despise such luxuries. They slept in a circle, feet inwards, with sacks and other things to snuggle under if necessary. On cold or wet mornings they looked like a great round heap of sacking, out of which men crawled on their hands and knees, yawning and rubbing their eyes.

When it rained the square tent was use-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

less and had to be struck, as the flat roof soon sagged and leaked. Then we dined in a Kabul tent, with the rain drumming on the canvas roof within a foot or two of our heads, and coming in in gusts whenever a poor wet servant handed us a dish through the half-fastened front. And oh, how wet the beds and bedding got ! Sometimes it was misery getting in among the sodden things. But this is anticipation. For some days after leaving Ispahan we had no cause to complain of the weather.

The square tent was also our reception tent. It was very small and plainly furnished, but we brightened it up with some coloured table and chair covers, and there our visitors were received with many apologies, and given the tea and "kalián," or pipe, which is a necessary part of a Persian visit.

Some Persian gentlemen now smoke cigarettes, but most prefer the kalián, a pipe with a long stem. The smoke is drawn through water, which seems to be rather hard work.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Tea is drunk in immense quantities in Persia, though I am told it was unknown forty or fifty years ago. Much of it is Indian tea.

At our second camp, Bistjan, in the upper part of the Zainda valley, our sportsmen found quantities of duck and snipe and teal, and the Hizhabr ul Mulk learned to shoot birds flying. Persians as a rule shoot birds sitting, or running, and the idea of shooting them in the air, "hawai," was new to him. He was much pleased when he shot his first couple of teal out of a flight which went over his head.

On the third day we left the Zainda valley and crossing the rocky "gardani" or pass called the Kotul i Rukh, nearly 8,000 feet above the sea, we entered the Chahar Mahal, a hilly province administered by the Bakhtiari chiefs. Looking back from the pass we had a beautiful view of the Zainda valley, 2,000 feet below us, and of the plains towards the north-west. At a stone hut on the summit we were met by two young chiefs, with some of their

AN AUTUMN TOUR

tribesmen, who welcomed us on behalf of the tribe. The boys were very polite and pleasant, and their following was picturesque. Mounted mostly on well-bred Bakhtiari mares, with very blood heads and powerful quarters, these tribesmen would gallop wildly along the stony slopes to right and left of us, firing with their Martini carbines at any prominent mark they could fix upon. If nothing else offered, one of them would throw down his flat-topped felt cap, the typical Bakhtiari head-dress, and his friends would gallop past and fire at it. I am bound to say the cap rarely suffered much except from the fall, for the shooting was erratic. Sometimes they would shoot across the line of march, and once Mr. Rennie was splashed with mud from a wandering bullet, which struck the ground close to his horse. But it was all very picturesque and charming.

I remember so well our first night in the Chahar Mahal, at a place called Kahvarukh, where Mrs. Bishop was robbed

AN AUTUMN TOUR

some years before. It was rather cold at sunset, but before the light had faded a very broad full moon rose over a mountain to the eastward. On its sides flocks of sheep and goats were still feeding, looking in the clear air and immense distance like a little pepper and salt sprinkled on the bare slopes. One never realizes until one is in Central Asia what distances are. In Europe everything is so close and big.

At Tehran, looking down to the southward over the plain from the rising ground above the town, one could almost always see the hills beyond Kum, the sky line of which is considerably over a hundred miles away. One saw other ranges too, still more distant. In winter they looked perfectly clear, though delicate. In summer they were sometimes in the heat of the day hidden by the haze, but in the morning they were always visible. There is a great fascination about this clear bright air, and the most barren scenery looks beautiful in it. The mountains take the most exquisite shades of colour, and so do the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

broad stretches of desert. Only one must have sun. In rain or falling snow, or when the sky is grey, it is difficult to conceive anything more dismal than the scenery of Tehran. The bare treeless mountains look unutterably forbidding ; and the stony plain, strewn with innumerable skeletons of camels and mules and horses, without a sign of life but for the dogs and the great black ravens, is depressing beyond words. Happily such days are rare. Persia is the land of the sun. I think it would not be too much to say that the sky is without a cloud for at least three hundred days in the year. We generally had a few days of rain in November and practically no more all the year round.

On the 19th of October we mounted and marched to a place called Shamsabad, where we lunched near the walls of a mud fort, by a running stream ten yards broad, under the fine lofty crags of the Jehanbín mountain—the World Sighter, which is said to be 12,000 feet high. Thence we marched

AN AUTUMN TOUR

on to Jánagán, generally pronounced Joonagan or Joonagoon, where we were the guests of Sardar Haji Ali Kuli Khan, the diplomatist of the Bakhtiari tribe, who generally lives in Tehran as the representative of his family. We diverged at the village of Kharaji from the route followed by Mrs. Bishop and General Schindler, striking out to the westward between the Jehan Bin and the Kuh i Shekh, a precipitous isolated hill which is kept as a game preserve by the Bakhtiari Khans.

By the way it is very curious to hear the Persians of the north pronouncing their long vowels. I remember being asked in England what we called the capital of Persia. I said "Tehrán." The answer was, "Oh, that is all very well in Persia, but you don't call it that in England." I said, "Why, what do you call it in England?" "Oh, we call it Teheeran."

The real pronunciation is more like what in England we would spell Terarn or Terawn, and the Persians having a trick of turning their long a's into long oo's it is

AN AUTUMN TOUR

often pronounced in vulgar speech Teroon. "Nan" bread is pronounced "Noon"; "Kháneh," a house, becomes "Khooneh," and so on. So Jánagán became Joonagan or Joonagoon. It is rather puzzling at first.

Three miles out of Jánagán we were met by the Sirdar in person with a hundred Bakhtiari horsemen, and we swept down the valley in great style, the horsemen galloping out along the stony slopes to right and left, and firing incessantly. On arriving at the town, or village, a large place with two thousand inhabitants, the Sirdar took us into his own house and gave us some tea. It was a fine new house with many curious prints and pictures on the walls; and his little son, a bright pleasant boy of twelve, came and read to us a little story out of an English book. We remained at Jánagán all the next day, and my husband and Mr. Rennie went out with the Bakhtiari chiefs for a day's ibex shooting on the flat-topped Kuh i Shekh close by. They had, I believe, a successful drive, and killed two bucks.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

These mountains are full of game, ibex and moufflon and partridges and other things, but they are much shot. The Bakhtiariis now have such good weapons that they are killing the game down fast. So at least we were told.

These Chahar Mahal districts are really very beautiful. They are in most places rather bare of trees, but the broad grassy valleys, with their rich crops of wheat often climbing hundreds of feet up the hillsides, have a beauty of their own. At the bottom of the valleys are streams and some irrigated lands, but far above these you see yokes of oxen looking as small as ants, ploughing patches of ground for rain or snow crops. And above the dark patches on the slopes are craggy precipices, thousands of feet in height, the home of the wild goat and the eagle. A white speck on a perpendicular cliff almost out of sight, where no mortal foot has ever climbed or ever will climb, marks the nest of the eagle or the huge lammergeyer ; and as we marched along the valley we often saw these grand birds,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

sometimes hanging in the air close above us, their yellow heads turning to right and left as they watched our movements, sometimes barely visible, mere specks in the dazzling blue. When not hanging in the wind they fly with wonderful speed. You will see one come out of the distance on your left and sail away into the distance on your right without apparently a single beat of the wings, which remain outspread and motionless.

Many of the villages in the Chahar Mahal are Christian. They are inhabited by Armenians, who make good cultivators.

Our hospitable chief, a courteous high-bred gentleman, did everything he could to make our stay pleasant. A very hard fighter in his young days when there were feuds in the clan, he is now, though barely middle-aged, a man of peace. All his influence, which is great, he devotes to the prevention of the deplorable quarrels which have done so much harm to his tribe in the past ; and in his intervals of leisure he has found time to gain some knowledge of

AN AUTUMN TOUR

French, and to make a collection of antiquities. The Bakhtiari mountains have seen many waves of invasion in the old days, and some very interesting relics of ancient civilizations are still at times to be found in the villages of the hillmen. I hear that Sardar Haji Ali Kuli Khan has been in England since our visit to him, and I greatly regret that we knew nothing of it until too late. It would have been a great pleasure to see him again.

Any one who wishes to know more about this interesting part of Persia should read Mrs. Bishop's book, *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan*, which describes the tribes and their country in detail, and in a singularly vivid and accurate way.

CHAPTER VI

ON the 21st of October we marched out of the Chahar Mahal over the Zirreh pass into the real Bakh-tiari highlands, where we were to meet the other chiefs.

It was first an easy ride of ten miles or so to a place called Dastaná, where we had breakfast, and then a long stony climb over a pass 8,600 feet high, which in winter is blocked with snow. One of Haji Ali Kuli Khan's brothers accompanied us, and was most pleasant and helpful.

When we reached the top of the pass we saw before us the true Bakhtiari country, a grim-looking mass of mountains clothed in part with "belút" oak forests. The upper peaks, some of which are nearly 13,000 feet in height, were already white with snow. Behind us was a beautiful view over the valley towards the great

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Jehanbín. We descended about three hundred feet and passed through the grassy Siligun valley, skirting a sheet of water which was alive with duck and teal, and then going up a long narrow gorge we found ourselves above our camp at Naghun, a village under the hillside. We could see our tents some hundreds of feet below us, near a vineyard to the right of the village. To the left was a rough fort of brick and mud which was inhabited by the chiefs.

Mr. Rennie joined us in the evening, having come by another route, through the Darkash Warkash defile, which caravans have to use in winter when the Zirreh pass is blocked. Through this defile the drainage of a large part of the Chahar Mahal pours into the Karun River.

At Naghun we were met and received by the assembled Khans, and nothing could have been more kind and hospitable than the reception they gave us. Not only did they behave with the greatest courtesy to our party in general, but they asked to see me, and were so polite and agreeable that

AN AUTUMN TOUR

they made me feel at once I was among gentlemen.

It is a very general idea that Orientals do not regard or treat women with much respect, but certainly these well-mannered courteous highland chiefs were as pleasant to meet as any European could be.

We halted a day in Naghun, at least I did. My husband and Mr. Rennie spent the day, after the usual visits and return visits, in riding over to the tribal summer headquarters, at Chighakhor. They came back in the evening very content with life, having galloped twenty miles on Bakhtiari mares and shot some duck and snipe, and seen the Chighakhor valley, which they described as a beautiful green basin, surrounded with mountains. There had been a fight there some two or three months before, and I believe some people had been killed, but the clansmen were all quite friendly again. One of them said, "Ah, you should see Chighakhor in summer. It is like an emerald."

The chiefs seemed to be on very good

AN AUTUMN TOUR

terms with each other. It seems that on the death of the late headman or Ilkhani, who died just before we left Ispahan, his sons and the sons of his brother, who had been chief before him, agreed not to dispute about the succession to the chiefship. It was unselfish and wise of them, for the tribe has suffered much in past times from family feuds. When we were there the eldest nephew of the late chief, by name Isfendiar Khan, was the head of his tribe, but his eldest cousin, the Sipahdar, or Commander-in-Chief, seemed to be nearly on an equality with him. Each had several brothers, who joined in the family councils, but mostly sat on the floor while their elders had chairs. The confirmation by His Majesty the Shah of the succession of Isfendiar Khan was, I believe, awaited.

The chiefs were very well read. It was curious to hear them talking of Stanley's travels in Africa, and the war in the Transvaal, and bacteriology, and all sorts of unexpected things. The Sipahdar told us he

AN AUTUMN TOUR

had a son who was being educated in Paris. Many of the chief men in Persia send their sons to be educated on the Continent. The son of the Foreign Minister was brought up in Russia, the son of the Minister of Telegraphs was brought up in Germany, and so on. Not many go to England ; they say our English schools are too expensive. This seems a pity, not only on our account, but because an English public school training is just what an Oriental boy wants. Oriental boys, even Bakhtiari boys, are always so old for their age. They are never boys in our sense of the word, but very young men, in very small frock coats. They are dear little dignified, well - mannered creatures, but they are not boys.

Leaving Naghun, where we were the guests of the Sirdar, we went on a few miles to another tribal village and fort, Ardal, where we were the guests of the Sipahdar, the cousins, however, accompanying us.

We were quite ashamed of being such a

AN AUTUMN TOUR

burden on these openhanded chiefs. They would not hear of our paying for anything, and as our party was large the expense must have been great. Every day we saw stacks of grain and fodder for the horses being put down in our camp, and great heaps of sugar loaves for the servants, and melons and other fruit, and sweetmeats enough to make all our people ill. To our expostulations the chiefs answered, "It is nothing. We are ashamed that we cannot receive you properly ; we are only wild hillmen."

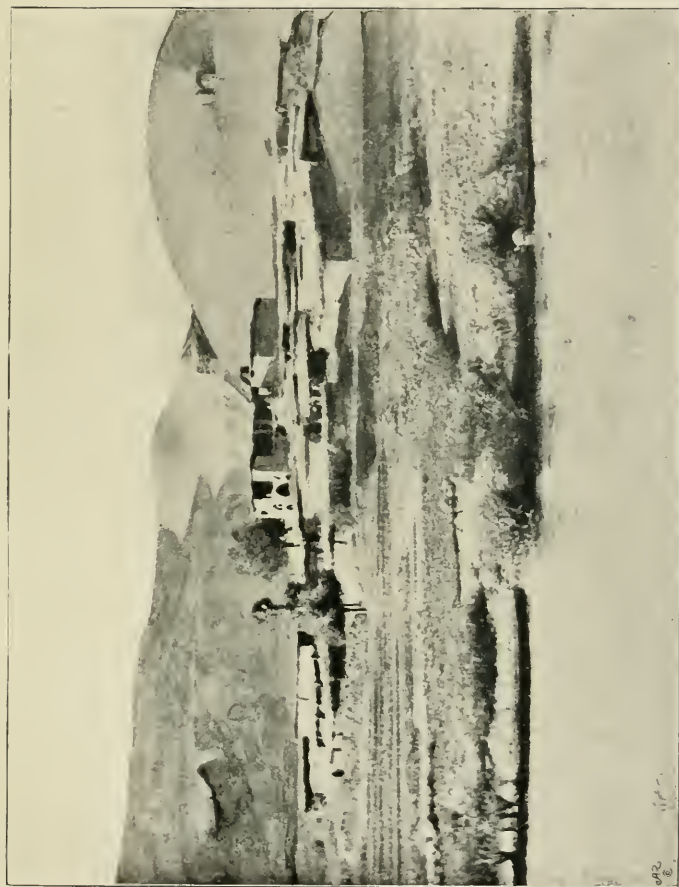
Imagine a Highland chief whose country is three hundred miles long, whose mountains are nearly as high as the Alps, and whose clansmen are numbered by scores of thousands. The total number of the Bakhtiaris is said to be little under a quarter of a million.

From Ardal, on the 24th of October, we all walked out to the mouth of the Darkash Warkash gorge, a very wild and beautiful spot where the river breaks through the mountains from the Chahar Mahal. At

AN AUTUMN TOUR

the mouth of the pass is the little village of Bihishtabad, the village of heaven. It lies in a hollow, sheltered from the east wind, which was sweeping the treeless Ardal plain that day with such strength that I could hardly stand against it. At times I was forced to turn my back upon it to get my breath. Coming back Mr. Rennie shot some teal and snipe.

We were told by one of the Bakhtiari Khans that some years before "a stone had fallen from the sky" at Ardal. He said they were sitting in their council room when there was a loud report like a cannon shot, and, going out, they found a large stone had fallen and buried itself in the ground. It seemed quite different from any stone known in the country, "more like iron." Unluckily we had left Ardal when the story was told us, and were unable to search. We wrote to the Khans, but the answer was that the stone could not be found. It seems probable, however, that there exists a Bakhtiari meteorite, for the description was almost unmistakable and



BHISITABAD—THE VILLAGE OF HEAVEN.

From a Photograph by Mr. Rennie.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

was volunteered without any questions from us. There is one known meteorite in Tehran, and while we were there a collector came out all the way from America to see it, and if possible to get a piece. The Shah very kindly said he might have one ; and with infinite difficulty, for the thing was almost as hard as a gem, he succeeded in cutting off a corner, and went away happy.

At Ardal we had our first serious warning of the weather in store for us. So far it had been fine enough, but in the night, after a wild sunset, a storm broke over the mountains to the west, and we had heavy wind and rain which wetted the feet of our beds in our Kabul tents. Next morning the tops of the high mountains all around us were white with new fallen snow.

We had to get through them, march after march, before reaching the Arab plains, and then we had to come back through them before reaching Tehran again.

We left Ardal on the 25th of October, and the chiefs in a body rode with us for ten

AN AUTUMN TOUR

miles across the rolling valley. They talked a great deal about an English officer, Major Sawyer, who had been in the country some years before. He was a very tall powerful man, and a great climber and sportsman, and he is much admired by the Bakhtiari. Towards sunset we reached the top of a tremendous gorge where the work on the new road began.

Sofar the trade route seemed good enough for mule caravans without improvement. Now we were to see the heart of the Bakhtiari hills, and our introduction to it was certainly rough. When the Khans said goodbye to us we plunged into a gorge such as I have rarely seen. To our left was the Kuh i Sabz, a mountain topped by immense craggy precipices, many hundreds of feet in height, below which were oak forests and cliffs overhanging a rushing river, the Karun. We descended perhaps a thousand feet by a winding mule track, where the work must have been very hard, and at last found our tents among some oaks the other side of the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

river, at a place called Dopulán. To get to them we had to cross by a narrow bridge of wicker work, forty feet above the water, with no rail. It was tipped over sideways, and looked very shaky altogether, but we got across without difficulty, and had a very pleasant afternoon and evening. Mrs. Bishop gives in her book a picture of this place, showing a masonry bridge in good repair. This had evidently been carried away by the water.

We were now at an altitude of about 5,000 feet above the sea, and it was much warmer than at Ardal, which is nearly 6,000 feet, and more exposed.

My husband and Mr. Rennie tried to fish in the river, which looked an ideal trout stream, big enough indeed for salmon, but they got nothing. They had tried many streams before on our march, but without success. There are quantities of trout and salmon in the rivers north of Tehran, which run into the Caspian. Every year some of the Legation used to go and fish in the Lar valley, forty miles off, in the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

mountains, and they killed great numbers of trout. One of the Secretaries, a great fisherman, going out on a cloudy day, once, if I am not mistaken, brought back in the evening over two hundred. At almost every dinner party in Tehran a huge salmon with a lemon in his mouth is put over your shoulder. But the rivers in Central Persia which lose themselves in the desert, and those of Southern Persia which fall into the hot waters of the Persian Gulf, seem to contain no fish worth catching. Our fishermen used always to come back disappointed, after having tried without success flies and minnows and everything they could think of. The natives catch fish in plenty, but they are tasteless white things, and will not take a fly. They are caught either in nets or sometimes with pieces of meat or with a sort of poison. The people here know of a seed which intoxicates fish. They make it up into balls with dough and throw the balls into the water. After some time the fish begin to float up to the surface, rolling

AN AUTUMN TOUR

over and over and unable to guide themselves. They are collected quite easily, and it seems that they are fit to eat, the seed being harmless to human beings. We did not care to try.

The Caspian salmon, by the way, are netted. There seems to be no reason why they should not take a fly, but so far no one has succeeded in getting any salmon fishing in these rivers. Perhaps they have not been very thoroughly tried.

Talking of dinner parties in Tehran reminds me of a curious Tehran custom. The Legations are most of them close together, and very often we used to walk to a friend's house instead of driving. Before us walked men carrying lanterns—which were very necessary, for the roads were full of dangerous holes. These lanterns, according to Persian custom, varied in size with the importance of the person before whom they were borne. You could always tell when a Vezír Mukhtar was coming because there were two huge lanterns each as big as a big drum. The Secretaries had

AN AUTUMN TOUR

smaller lanterns according to rank, until at the bottom of the official ladder the lantern was about the size of a small concertina. The servants were very particular about this.

The lanterns were made of waxed muslin and wire, with metal top and bottom. A candle was stuck in the bottom piece, and the top had a metal handle which a servant slung over his arm. The light resisted much wind and rain.

CHAPTER VII

WE left Dopulán on the 26th of October, and had a long march to our next halting-place, Sarkhun. It was a difficult march, up and down very steep hills, where Messrs. Lynch had tried hard with their limited means to make a passable mule track. They have, I believe, only five or six thousand pounds to make a road a hundred and fifty miles long. Now and then we came to a bit of soft ground, with open forest glades, and here one could have driven a coach and four, but as a rule it was very rough travelling ; quite practicable for mule caravans, but steep and rough.

I was vexed to find that our servants had left behind us at Dopulán a box of bulbs collected for us by our kind Bakhtiari chiefs. The country about Naghun and Ardal abounds in a sort of very pretty delicate yellow crocus, which was in full flower when

AN AUTUMN TOUR

we passed through, and all about the plain were thousands of miniature arums or "lords and ladies," a dark upright stem covered by a little hood. But the peculiarity of the Bakhtiari flower was that it was very small compared to our English "lords and ladies," perhaps only three or four inches high, and that the inside of the hood was a beautiful deep claret colour, like dark ruby velvet. I wanted to send some bulbs home to Shropshire, but our servants forgot them ; or more probably thought them a nuisance and left them behind.

In spring and summer the Bakhtiari mountains are apparently covered with wild flowers of every kind. When we passed through them we saw hardly any, which was disappointing.

On the march to Sarkhun we had one of those incidents which enliven a tiring day and stick in the memory more than important things. At one point we climbed out of a deep ravine or valley and got upon a track which led us into another valley, over

AN AUTUMN TOUR

the top of a tremendous line of cliffs. The track was good enough, but immediately below us there was a very steep slope, ending in a drop over a precipice some hundreds of feet in depth. Just as we reached the critical point the one-eyed cook, who was in front, slipped and fell, and his lambskin kulah or busby dropped and rolled down the slope. The cook ran after it, and for a moment or two we were in terror lest he should lose his foothold and go over the edge. However, he pulled himself up in time, and stood looking on ruefully while his kulah went bounding down and finally disappeared into space. For the rest of the march he wore a flat-topped Bakhtiari felt hat. Several of the servants had already made the exchange, and eventually when we marched into Tehran the Bakhtiari felt cap was the only head-dress in the camp.

At Sarkhun we found a great spring, almost a river, gushing out of a rocky precipice by the roadside, and our camp was pitched near a clump of splendid plane trees which grew in the running water. It was still

AN AUTUMN TOUR

hot marching in the day, and I remember the Hizhabr ul Mulk and the rest of our party drinking many cups of tea and eating many slices of melon when we got in. It was our farewell to the melons of Ispahan, which are not to be found farther west.

The planes or chinárs of Persia are very fine. The Legation gardens at Tehran and Gulhek, our summer headquarters, had great avenues of them. With their white or particoloured bark and clear cut leaf and tiny hanging globes, they always seemed to me one of the most beautiful of trees. But the chinárs of Persia are not, I am told, so large as those of Kashmir, nor do they take the same crimson tint in autumn.

As we marched away next morning it was raining a little, but the narrow oak-clad valley looked very green and picturesque, and we had our first sight of the real Bakhtiari highland villages. There was a big village at Sarkhun, chiefly composed of black felt tents. The people were wild, and looked very poor, but they had taking faces—very regular features and very white teeth, with

AN AUTUMN TOUR

short straight noses. The women seemed much amused at us, but a pretty little boy, to whom I offered a coin, fled in terror and would not be persuaded to come to me.

The shape of the Bakhtiari head is quite different from the shape of the Persian head. The latter generally inclines backward from above the eyes. The former seems to be more square in the forehead, and more flat on the top. The type of face too is different. The Bakhtiari and Lur face struck me as more like what one sees in Assyrian carvings.

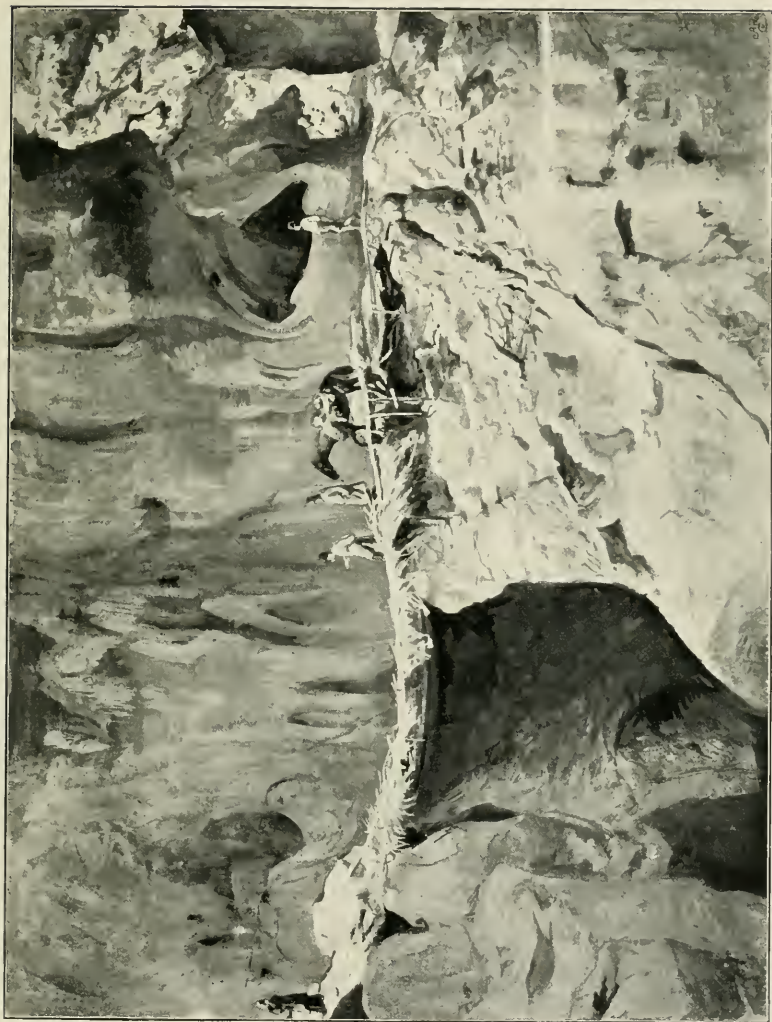
Close to the village a man rushed out and stopped my husband's horse, gesticulating wildly, and pointing to some scars on his neck. I could not understand what he said, but I heard afterwards that the man had been unlucky enough to kill some one, and had consequently been confined with a chain round his neck, and all his property had been confiscated. He appealed for "Insáf," justice. He freely admitted that he had killed a man, but he argued that he had been much provoked and that the punishment was ex-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

cessive. "After all, one must kill people sometimes," he said. I don't know what the settlement was, but the party broke up with laughter all round, and every one seemed satisfied. Of course it was a matter in which a British minister could not interfere.

That night was unpleasant. We got to a very nice little camp, near a place called Shalíl, but in the evening while we were at dinner, heavy rain came on, and we were flooded out of our Shamiána, which collapsed. All night the deluge continued, and the roar of the stream just below us and the drumming of the rain on the tiny Kabul tents combined to make an almost deafening noise. To make matters worse, one of our servants managed to get into a quarrel with a Bakhtiari. He was foolish enough to strike or threaten to strike one of these wild highlanders, who immediately drew his knife and tried to stab him.

Men are too fond of carrying knives in Persia, and sometimes the results are serious. One of our servants at Tehran got into trouble in this way a year or two ago. He



A BRIDGE IN THE BAKHTIARI COUNTRY.

From a Photograph.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

went down from Gulhek to Tehran one day, and coming back felt tired and tried to borrow a donkey from a man who had several. The man refused, and our servant, who was, I am afraid, tipsy, drew a knife and stabbed him. The poor man was brought to our Gulhek village and died almost immediately.

It was fine after the night's rain, and we rode out in good spirits to effect the passage of our first really bad crossing, the bridge over the Bazuft, a main feeder of the Karun.

This was a very difficult operation. Marching down some hundreds of feet over an open grassy slope we came to a place where the river broke through a great mass of rocks by a cleft in places not more than ten feet wide. We wound down by a very narrow and broken path, the mules constantly falling, until we reached a point about fifty feet above the level of the water. Here a curious knife-edge of rock jutted out almost across the river, a short wicker bridge joining it to the opposite bank. The whole passage was perhaps thirty yards across. Along the knife-edge of rock, wet and

AN AUTUMN TOUR

muddy and sloping, our horses and mules were led one by one, a number of barefooted Lur highlanders clambering along before and behind and beside them. Below was deep water, swirling out from the rocky cleft, and above us the precipitous crags, with the remains of an old stone bridge, the Pul i Amarat, a hundred and fifty feet above our heads.

How all the animals got across without a mishap I never could understand. One or two slipped and fell—among them a mule carrying Mr. Rennie's uniforms and guns, but the Lurs at once swarmed all over him like ants, and prevented his struggling, and unloaded him as he lay. Somehow all the animals did get across, and we followed on foot. I remember my husband's big Australian horse balancing himself on the rocky path, his Hindustani syce leading him and a wild Lur hanging on to his tail. As he reached the worst place he stopped and looked despairingly round, and down at the water, and up at the overhanging precipice. For a second we held our breath

AN AUTUMN TOUR

with anxiety, and then the well-bred sensible old horse stepped forward and walked quietly across the ricketty wicker bridge. He was trembling when we came up with him. We brought him home to England with us, and have got him now in Spain.

The water of the Bazuft is of a peculiarly beautiful colour, a very bright green. I do not know to what this is due.

From the bridge we had a long climb up a stony mountain slope—a typical Bakhtiari mountain. The Lynch “road” crosses the range, or series of parallel ranges, at right angles, and it was rather like marching along the edge of a saw. A railway in this country, if it went straight, would be all tunnels and bridges, and going round would be difficult, for the mountains are very long, and the streams in the narrow valleys between them are often overhung by immense precipices. A perpendicular or overhanging cliff of two thousand feet in height is, I am told, nothing uncommon on the course of the Karun.

This particular mountain, the Safid Kuh

AN AUTUMN TOUR

or white mountain I think they call it, was a typical instance. We climbed out of the stream round a rocky corner to a height of about two hundred feet, and looked down the valley. To the south-east, where the Bazuft joins the Karun, the distant precipices looked like colossal blue walls. It was a magnificent view. We then zigzagged up a stony slope, sparsely dotted with oaks, for about two thousand feet more. The slope was at an angle of about thirty degrees. This I am told means a rise of more than one foot in two, which is steep, even for mules.

However, we got over it in time, and camped that night, after another similar but less formidable climb, in the beautiful valley of Dehdiz, where we found a large village surrounded by pomegranate orchards, and the remains of an old fort. "In the days of the Atabegs" the villagers said, "there was a great town here—but 'Kharáb shud,' it is ruined." Now as far as one could see lay the rolling oak forest. The Atabegs lived and ruled some hundreds of

AN AUTUMN TOUR

years ago, and anything old is always spoken of as dating from their days. Probably some of the ruins are in reality far older, dating from the Romans and Greeks.

They were nice people here, and we had long talks with some of them. I remember one good-looking Lur boy came and stood talking and laughing with us, his arm round our tent pole. He smoked several of Mr. Rennie's cigarettes and was most cheery. Before we went he sent us a string of dried figs, which were a great comfort to us afterwards.

The villagers everywhere used to come to us for medicine, especially for quinine, "Ganigani" as they called it. They suffer much from fever, and prize quinine very highly. An envelope full will earn the gratitude of a whole village. At Dehdiz we gave away a quantity, Dr. Odling, the Legation surgeon, always kind and thoughtful, who knows Persia as few Englishmen know it, having insisted upon our taking a large store with us. But here two men came to us who wanted some more

AN AUTUMN TOUR

serious help, and my husband, who used to be called in occasionally to help Mr. Rennie and me, had to come to the front. The two patients demanded to see the Vezír Mukhtar in person.

The first man had his arm tied up, and explained that it had been badly wounded and rendered powerless by a sword cut, and he wanted us to give him some medicine to cure it. Like all wild men the Lurs shrink from surgical operations, and always think that you can give them something to drink that will cure them of any injury. My husband refused, and said he must see the wounded arm. The man objected at first, but after some time gave in, and we unrolled the bandage in which the arm was wrapped. This consisted of several long strips of printed cotton, horribly dirty, and caked into a mass which was not easy to separate. It was done at last, and the poor man's arm was laid bare. It was stained with the colours from the print, which had run, but instead of a horrible wound, which we expected to see, there was a long healthy

AN AUTUMN TOUR

scar from above the elbow to the wrist. The hand and arm had been so long and so tightly bound up that the man could not move his finger or wrist or elbow. My husband examined the arm and then washed it, and began to work the joints from the fingers upwards. The patient complained a good deal at first, but submitted under encouragement, and very soon all the joints began to move. When this result had been obtained, my husband told him that he was cured, that it was only a question of time, and that all he had to do was to keep washing his arm and working the joints. The man evidently looked upon this as a miraculous cure, for he gave a shout of joy and fell at my husband's feet, clasping his ankles and kissing his feet in a transport of gratitude. Then he ran off waving his arm, surrounded by an admiring crowd.

The second case was a sad one. A thin miserable-looking man stepped forward, and looked wistfully in our faces. He was suffering much from internal pain, and had a curious clayey complexion. Though we

AN AUTUMN TOUR

were not certain as to his disease we felt that we were able to do little or nothing for him, and could not promise him that our medicine would make him well again. The poor man had evidently hoped for a sudden cure like the first, and turned away disappointed. How one longs for the gift of healing in such cases ! to see the light come into a man's face, and feel that his long misery is over. Alas, it is so rarely that one can help !

We marched from Dehdiz the next morning, and after some pleasant riding through oak woods came once more into the valley of the Karun, which we had left at Dopulán. We found it here a very swift rushing river perhaps eighty yards broad. We had some unpleasant corners to get round, for the road here was at times little more than a goat track, and a slip would have sent a horse rolling down goodness knows how far. When the drop is on the near side, one is really over it on a side saddle. Finally near the end of the march we came upon a place where we had to cross for some hundreds of



A PIECE OF THE ROAD NEAR GODÁR.

From a Photograph by Mr. Rennie.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

yards the face of a steep rock cliff, a hundred feet above the river. It was not very alarming really, because there was a "fault" in the rock, and going in single file one had good foothold, but none of us cared to ride.

After a few minutes more, and a very steep rocky climb, we found ourselves on a small plateau where there were some signs of habitation, and there we were met by Mr. Taylor, the local head of the firm of Lynch Brothers, who was making the road. He invited us to lunch, and we made our way down to a little white building below us, where we found Mrs. Taylor installed in the stable of a new caravanseri built by her husband. In a tent on the plateau, and then in this stable, she had passed the whole summer, surrounded by rocky precipices which gave out so fierce a heat that the thermometer stood in her room at 120 degrees. Her husband was working at a bridge which he was building across the river at this point, Godár i Balutak, and the clean new stable was at all events better than a tent.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN we had eaten our lunch, Mr. Taylor took us to see the bridge he was building, and explained to us how we were to get over the river.

It was not a very tempting prospect. The point chosen for the bridge is no doubt a good one, a bend in the river where the rocks on each side come comparatively close together, perhaps within sixty yards. There are some remains here of a former bridge of masonry, built in ancient days when the country was comparatively civilized. All over the Bakhtiari country such remains are to be found, bridges and forts and stone causeways, but it is always the same story, "Kadím ast, khaile kadím, hala kharáb shud" — "It is old, very old, now it is ruined." The river roars over the boulders a hundred feet below. It is necessary to keep the bridge high above the stream because in flood

AN AUTUMN TOUR

time the water rises forty or fifty feet or more. We saw the marks of the water action on the rocks, and there were bits of drift wood in the water-worn holes more than half way up.

The great stone piers had been very nearly finished, two on each side, and the iron work for the bridge brought out from England was lying ready ; but our only means of crossing was by a cradle slung upon two wire ropes, which spanned the gulf from piers to piers. You sat in this cradle and were pulled across by a rope coiled on a windlass.

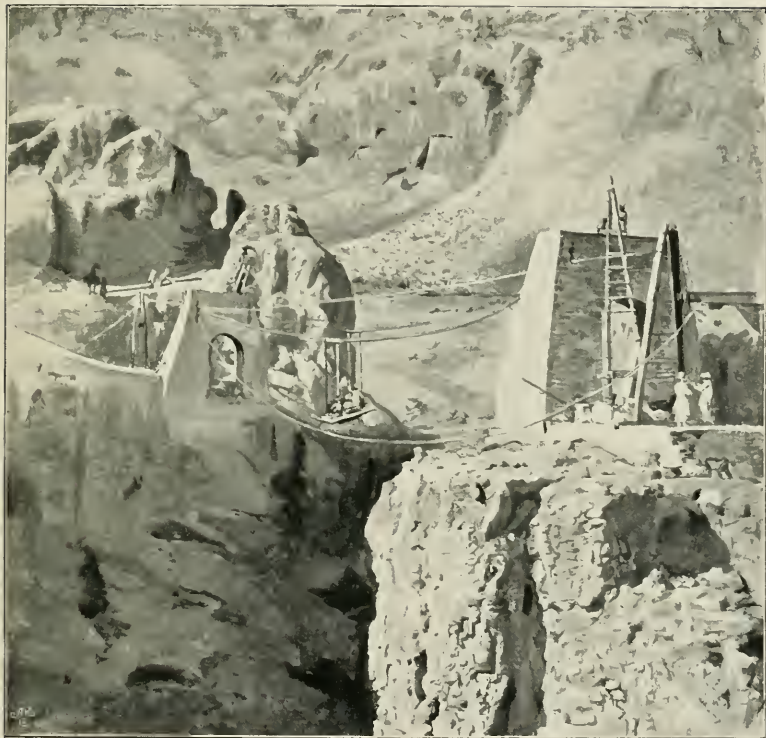
The cradle was a flat platform of boards, with a low rail round it—low, but high enough to slip through. We watched our boxes going across the river during the afternoon and evening, and it then became evident that we could not hope to get all our camp over that night, so we struck work at sunset and slept on the plateau.

Next morning we began again, and our horses and mules were sent away to a ford four miles off, where the river was said to

AN AUTUMN TOUR

be passable. It was a bad ford, for they all had to swim some distance, and in swift water among rocks, but though several were cut and bruised we lost none. My Arab and my husband's Australian gave much trouble. The Bakhtiari horses seemed to know all about it, and swam over quietly, as did the polo ponies.

A little before sunset we crossed ourselves, and it was very disagreeable. Mr. Taylor had kindly twisted a rope in and out over the rail, so that we could not well slip through, and had put a rug down for us to sit upon ; but when we walked to the edge of the stone platform between the piers to get into our cradle it did not look inviting. The wire rope naturally sagged a little in the middle of the stream, and the cradle came up with a little tilt, so that you stepped over the rail upon a carpeted floor which sloped downwards and outwards over an invisible drop. However, we got in safely, my husband and I sitting on the floor with one arm over the rail, and Mr. Rennie behind my husband. There



CROSSING THE KARUN AT GODÁR I BALUTAK.

From a Photograph by Mr. Rennie.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

we were stopped while Mrs. Taylor, for whom the cradle had no terrors, inhumanly photographed us with a Kodak.

Another second or two and we were off, —the little tray on which we sat wobbling somewhat as we ran out into space. Just in the middle Roughie, who lay in my lap, began to struggle, and I had to hold him tight, but it was soon over. Changing our hold to the opposite rail as we began to go up from the middle we were rapidly hauled to the western platform, and I was glad enough to feel the little bump which told us we had arrived. A few minutes later we were in our tents, which had been pitched close by on a grassy patch.

Here we found one of our servants lying ill, and the others told us the crossing had been too much for his nerves. He was an old man and had been unlucky. He was crossing alone with some baggage when the tow rope suddenly parted and the cradle was left swinging over the stream. The workmen on the bridge did their best to cheer up the poor man, who was very much

AN AUTUMN TOUR

frightened, and after some time they succeeded in throwing a stone over the cradle with a string attached to it. The string was followed by a rope, which he made fast to the cradle, and after a few minutes he was pulled safely to the other side, very much upset, but not in any way hurt.

My husband found him lying in a state of collapse, and dosed him on the spot. I don't know what the medicine was, but it was conveyed in a teacupful of old Scotch whisky from Dalgairns' of Dundee, and was greatly appreciated. The man said he felt better at once, and next day he was well enough to march.

We often noticed that a large quantity of whisky seemed to be required for the bruises on the horses' legs. No other medicine was regarded by our servants as nearly so efficacious.

We should have lost days at this point getting our baggage and tents across on skin rafts at the ford, and Mr. Taylor's cradle was a godsend to us. Not only did we get over all our things in twenty-four hours,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

but nothing was lost or damaged. Rafts are a dangerous method of transport in a swift rocky stream like the Karun, and we should certainly have had some accidents.

Since our crossing the work has been finished, and in the heart of this wild mountainous country an English merchant, helped by an English working engineer, Mr. Perryman, has succeeded in putting up a fine strong bridge of iron with material all brought from England. It is to be hoped that the energy and skill shown by these two Englishmen and their Hindustani workmen—for they had to import rivetters and stone workers from India—will result in the opening up of a satisfactory trade route.

Mr. Perryman has now, I believe, built another bridge, at the point described in my last chapter, Pul i Amarat.

The Indian workmen seemed much surprised and pleased at my being able to talk to them in their own language, and asked me at once to give them some quinine. We gave them plenty of this and some sheep for a feast, which seemed to make them quite happy.

CHAPTER IX

ON the 31st of October, in the early morning, we turned our backs on the bridge works at Godár, and struck across the hills for Malamír, on our way to the Arab plains.

It was a long tiresome march, but at the end of it, after some very unpleasant corners, and after seeing at various points some remains of an old stone causeway, possibly Roman, even possibly Greek, we came down a broad zigzag road made by Messrs. Lynch, and found ourselves in a flat valley perhaps twenty miles long. There was a nearly dry marsh in the middle of it, and many small villages under the hill sides all around. These villages were formed of rough huts, with walls of earth or piled stones, heaped round with thorn bushes and roofed with reeds. The people looked very poor and unhealthy, though our Bakhtiari guides in-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

dignantly denied this. "There is no water and air anywhere," they said, "like the water and air in the Bakhtiari country. There are no unhealthy people in our mountains."

We camped near Malamír, a big village of a hundred and fifty huts, close to a square mud fort with four corner towers. There was a sunk pond just behind our tents, and our horses were all washed in it, to the great amusement of the villagers.

At Malamír we halted a day, partly because our animals wanted rest, having been knocked about crossing the ford at Godár, and partly to see the rock carvings and inscriptions which Layard has made famous. My husband spent the morning in writing and getting things in order, while Mr. Rennie, always keen for sport, went out to try the marsh. In the afternoon we had a charming gallop across the flat plain to the northern hills, and found the rock carvings. Honestly I was rather disappointed. There were some figures carved on stone, not very well, in a village at the foot of the hills; and

AN AUTUMN TOUR

above the village, on a curious tablet under an overhanging rock, was a cuneiform inscription, which was rather difficult to reach. One had to climb up ten feet or so. The inscription being cut into a hard water drip formation was very clear, and above it were scratched the names H. Layard, 1841; A. Loftus, 1852; H. Wells, 1881; and others.

Soon after we got back to our tents some wild duck came flying close by our heads, almost touching us, and we saw one settle within fifty yards in a little stream running from our pond to the marsh. We pointed out the place to Mr. Rennie, who went out in the twilight and shot it. After this they kept dropping in twos and threes, and before it was dark he shot several more. In the early morning he went out again and got some snipe. Here it is said that in old days there was a great city, and it seemed a likely place, but no traces of a city remain.

How do the old cities sink into the earth and disappear? It is a thing that has often puzzled me. Some do, no

AN AUTUMN TOUR

doubt, like Susa ; but all the explanations, from drifting sand to meteoric dust, seem equally unsatisfactory.

While we were at Malamír a post came to us from Ispahan—two or three very old newspapers, but nothing of any importance, and no war news. It was anxious work.

We had intended to march from Malamír by the direct road to Shustar, the Bakhtiari chiefs having informed us that the march could be made with ease in four days. They described the road as quite “sāf” or smooth. We found that it was in fact very rough indeed, and hardly to be done by our animals in double the time, so we had to give up the idea, and to march from Malamír to Ahwaz.

To a Bakhtiari anything is “sāf” which is not a precipice, and I am sure the Khans had no idea of deceiving us. The Bakhtiaris really like rough roads. One Lur tribesman complained that the Lynch road was too smooth. There were no stones for your feet to catch hold of. And the carefully constructed zigzags were con-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

stantly broken down by the Lur shepherds, who preferred the straight climb up hill.

It would have been desirable to make the change of route in any case, as the trade road runs to Ahwaz, not Shuster.

On the 2nd of November we started again, and marched on to Kala i Tul, the place described by Layard in his delightful book, *Early Reminiscences*. At the beginning of the march we visited a curious cave on the south side of the Malamír plain. This was called the Shigaft i Salman, or cave of Solomon. It was reached by an ascent of a hundred feet or so through the ruins of old buildings, and was about fifty yards across, with a low second cave inside. The outer cave was high and airy, but moist. There were some carved figures and cuneiform inscriptions and masses of maidenhair fern, and clinging to the roof and flitting out and in we noticed some grey swallows, just the colour of the stone. Possibly our eyes deceived us, but they seemed different from any we had seen. There were some Lurs living in the inner cave, and a number of

AN AUTUMN TOUR

poor people clustered round us outside begging for help. It was sad to see them, for one could do nothing, and they looked very ill. The flesh of their legs and arms was shrunk away almost to nothing, their knees and elbow joints were very much swollen, and they had dreadful-looking eruptions on their bodies. We could only give them "Ganigani," and wonder what their disease was.

Then we passed through a long narrow valley, full of oak trees, with craggy mountains on both sides. Those to the right were like a saw, and reminded us of the Sewalik range in India. After ten miles or so we got out of the valley by a gorge and found ourselves in the plain of Kala i Tul.

This was at first sight very disappointing, for we could see nothing of the picturesque scenery described by Layard. Before us was a barren plain, overgrown with scrub, and two or three miles away a low mound with a mean-looking fort. We marched on, and camped close to the mound, which had a village clustering round it.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

My husband and Mr. Rennie went off in the evening to call on the Khan. Poor man, he was very depressed. The locusts had eaten everything in the valley for six years in succession, and his revenues were gone and his people suffering. He talked about Layard, as every one still does here, nearly sixty years after Layard's visit to the country, but he was not the descendant of Layard's old friend Taki Khan. I wonder if any one reads now the story of the Bakhtiari chief and his brave beautiful wife. It is a very touching story.

How it rained that night ! Storm after storm, until we were almost deafened with the noise of the rain on our tents and the thunder on the great Mangasht range to the north. In the morning it was still raining, and before we started my husband sat in the tent and made a pencil sketch, in our copy of Layard's book, of the fort as it seemed to us. The view we got of it was not as striking as Layard's, but I am bound to say that as we marched out by the south of the fort, and saw it backed by the dark chain of the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

mountains, Layard's sketch became very much less fanciful than it had seemed at first, and eventually we agreed that it was not very far out after all.

The sky cleared as we rode away, and the sun came out. Over the long rugged line of the Mangasht the storms were rolling along, and snow had fallen, but here in the valley the rice stubble was yellow in the sunlight, and among it were numberless black tents and camels and flocks belonging to the so-called Túrks. These are a section of the Bakhtiaris who during some ancient troubles took refuge with some Túrki tribes to the south, and there learnt to manage camels, which the Bakhtiaris do not keep. These people may be useful some day in opening up the new road, for I am told it is most important to establish camel transport, which is much cheaper than mules.

We had a long march that day, twenty-four miles, to a place called Abi Lashkar, which lies two or three miles off the road. We got there long after dark, our people having lost their way, among them my maid,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

who did not get in till ten o'clock. Next day we rode on to Jaru. I remember we passed over several hills of "gech" or gypsum, which gives very good foothold to the horses, soft but firm, and we saw a great deal of rice cultivation, which for some reason the locusts do not destroy.

At Jaru we were visited by the direct representatives of Layard's friend Taki Khan, and we gave them some presents as a thank-offering for the great kindness shown by their family to a wandering Englishman half a century ago. They seemed very pleased and touched.

Here at Jaru I remember we had a domestic calamity. Of course we had been unable to carry soda water with us, but we had had a "Sparklet" bottle, and very refreshing it had been to us on many a long and hot march, for even where the snow is around one the Persian sun is hot. Somehow one of us dropped a cartridge into the neck of the bottle, and there it stuck tight. We could not get it out, though we tried every possible device, and for the rest of

AN AUTUMN TOUR

the march we had to go without our sparklets. We had already got beyond the range of milk and butter, and potatoes had long been an unknown luxury.

Tea without milk is a thing I never could get reconciled to. Some people get to like it, and the Persians drink it in great quantities, very sweet indeed, but it always seemed to me quite horrid. One misses one's tea very much on a journey of this kind, more, perhaps, than anything else.

On the 5th of November we finally emerged from the Bakhtiari hills. How well I remember that march! For an hour or more we rode on in the morning light, until suddenly we came upon a steep descent, and perhaps a thousand feet below was a broad plateau which Mr. Taylor told us was the last of the hill country. We climbed down to it, and then rode for some miles across comparatively flat ground. At midday we stopped to lunch by a river under the shade of a steep bank. Very little shade there was, and we could only get it by climbing up the bank and making ledges for our feet. The

AN AUTUMN TOUR

dishes and bread had no level ground to rest upon, and were always trying to slip down into the river. Grey wagtails with little black shirt fronts were flitting about on the stones, and we saw one or two of the yellow variety, which are much less common in Persia. There were some curious long red-finned fish in the shallow water, and Mr. Rennie tried to shoot some, but failed. Then after a rest in the shade we went on for another hour or so, and reached the edge of the plateau.

Here we found ourselves at the top of an easy descent of about five hundred feet. Looking down we could see a great blue plain, Arabistán or the Arab country, stretching away to the westward, like the sea. Over it the sun was setting.

When we reached our camp, "Khandak," at the foot of the descent, we found that our men were drawing water from a row of holes on the sandy ground about fifteen feet deep. It was nasty-looking muddy water, and brackish, but the horses cried aloud for it and drank it greedily. Then the sun sank,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

and the swift eastern darkness began to gather, and the new moon set over the desert, and the stars brightened in the southern sky.

It felt very warm and pleasant. For a time at least we had left the mountains and the snow behind us.

CHAPTER X

ON the 6th of November we started from Khandak very early, shortly after sunrise, having before us a long march of nearly thirty miles to Weis, where we were to rejoin the Karun River. Since we had left it at Godár the Karun had made a long curve through the mountains to the north.

It was very pleasant after so many weeks of clambering among the mountains to get on the flat again, and put the horses into a good stretching gallop. The ground was beautiful, and the horses enjoyed it as much as we did. I remember that we stopped halfway at an Arab village or encampment, Haneri, to give them water. The village was a collection of tents and huts in the open plain, with a few nice well-bred Arab horses tethered outside. Behind the village were two or three wells, and close to each well a mud trough eight or ten feet long.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

A man with the regular Arab face and the peculiar hanging turban of the Bedouin came and drew some water in a skin from the shallow well, and poured it into a mud trough, from which the animals drank greedily.

Sometimes, I believe, Arab horses are not tethered at all, but play about round the villages with the children. This accounts for their fearless ways and pleasant manners. I once had a little grey Arab who used to come into our dining-room and stroll round the table, pushing his head over our shoulders and whinnying gently for bits of bread. Once I sent for him at a Simla dinner party, and he came round the table as usual, rather to the alarm of some of my guests. He was just like a big dog, and quite safe in a room by day or night, though his feet were not good for my carpets.

From Haneri we went on, and galloped into a dust storm. I was glad to see this, as it illustrated to some extent the old stories one used to read about the simooms

AN AUTUMN TOUR

in the desert. We had been looking as we rode at a beautiful mirage in front of us—imaginary trees and a blue lake—when suddenly there was a puff or two of cool air, and looking away to our right we saw a wide wall of sand and wind come rolling down at right angles to our line of march. Before it some camels and bullocks were running. We were afraid that it would catch us, but happily it swept across in front of us. It blotted out everything for a time, and we watched it rolling away to our left, and then all was still and quiet and we rode on. Before midday we had crossed the sandy tract and were on the banks of the Karun River, here a fine stream two or three hundred yards broad.

We had of course been told that Weis, the village on the banks of the Karun, was a splendid place. In the usual Persian phrase, which we had got to know so well, “Hama chiz darad,” “It has everything.” We found a big mud village, and we were able to get some barley and straw for the horses and unleavened bread for the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

men. I think we even got a little milk for our tea, but am not sure.

At this place we parted with our horses and the bulk of our camp. Ahwaz, the centre of the Karun trade, lay to the south, down the river, and we had eventually to go north, so we had decided to give our animals and men two or three days' rest, while we visited Ahwaz, and to let them march up ahead of us to Shuster. Here we were to catch them up by steamer, for in this the one real river of Persia there are steamers.

We parted accordingly, the Shekh, or headman, a pleasant little negroid Arab, having agreed to find us some horses. Never shall I forget the sixteen mile ride to Ahwaz. It began well, for the horses were duly brought round in the morning, and the Shekh had provided for me a milk-white Arab mare, which was said to be the pride of the village. I mounted it, and not very long afterwards, before we got into a canter, a messenger rode up from Ahwaz with a letter from Colonel Meade, the Resident in the Persian Gulf, who had come from

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Bushire to meet us. It was several days since we had had any news of the war, and we were very anxious to get it. The messenger brought a telegram in Persian from Mr. Spring Rice in Tehran, and my husband read it and translated it as we rode. It was several days old, but it cheered us greatly. The main point in it was, "No one in the Ninth Regiment has been killed or has eaten a wound."

That meant that no one had been killed or wounded in the 9th Lancers, my boy's regiment.

My husband passed on the telegram to the Hizhabr ul Mulk, who read it aloud to the Persians, and added "Alhamd ul illah," "Praise be to God."

In Persia you eat everything. If you go out for a drive you "eat the air." If you are a dishonest Governor you "eat the Revenue." If you get a fall riding you "eat the earth." If you are a criminal, or have the ill-luck to offend a powerful man, you "eat sticks," with the soles of your feet.

After discussing the telegram we broke

AN AUTUMN TOUR

into a gallop, and cheered as I had been by the news I soon began to suffer. I was tired from a sleepless night, and some trouble from asthma, and I found that the milk-white mare, the pride of the desert, was more horribly rough than any creature I ever sat upon. It seems ungracious to say so, but it is true. I tried hard to find her proper pace, but all were the same—trot, canter, or gallop she shook me nearly to pieces. When the long hot sixteen miles were finished, I was quite worn out and I am afraid very cross.

I remember that the sand-grouse were literally in thousands all round us as we rode—great flocks flying across the road in front of us and behind us. I never saw anything like it except once in the plains of Jodhpur in Rajputana.

At Ahwaz we were met by Colonel and Mrs. Meade. Colonel Meade had with him the Vice Consul at Muhamra, Mr. M'Doual, and the Residency Surgeon, and Mr. Hudleston of the Navy, who had come up from one of the ships at Bushire.

It was very pleasant to see some English

AN AUTUMN TOUR

people again, and pleasant also to get into a well-appointed luxurious camp, with everything comfortable about one. The Meades had come by steamer all the way from Bushire, and their camp was a contrast to ours. They received us in big Indian tents, and regaled us with soda water, and potatoes, and milk, and all sorts of almost forgotten luxuries.

There were several people at Ahwaz besides the Meades and their party. There were the Taylors, who had marched with us from Godár, and Mr. Parry, the local representative of the great firm of Lynch Brothers, and others.

We wanted to ask them all to dinner, and we had brought with us two square single pole tents across the mountains for such purposes. We had also brought with us plenty of wine and glass and china. But, alas! when we arrived in Ahwaz the rough mountain journey had been too much for us. Our chairs, beautiful camp folding chairs of the most solid make, were all broken but three. Our lamps were all disabled, and our candlesticks had only two glass shades left. One of

AN AUTUMN TOUR

these was cracked and the other had a grotesque Lion and Sun painted on it, a bad attempt at the national emblem of Persia. Plates we had, and wine ; but the glass box, with the glasses cunningly packed in little compartments, had fallen down one of the numerous precipices with a mule, and hardly enough glasses remained for half a dozen people. Finally it came on to pour with rain, and the tents were dripping, and all around them was a morass. I remember looking out with a feeling of utter despair across pools of water, gleaming in the light of some lamps the Meades had lent us, and bristling with raindrops, while my guests waded through the mud under their umbrellas, and the rain roared on the canvas roof over my head.

Dear kind people ! how good and pleasant they were ! But oh the rain and the misery of it !

That evening too we received bad news from Africa. Glencoe and Dundee were gone, and our troops were shut up in Ladysmith.

It was very depressing altogether, and the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

servants were all cross, and I could have cried as I went over at midnight through the puddles and the mud and rain to my little Kabul tent. I felt that it had been such a wretched evening for every one.

We stayed at Ahwaz two or three days, as my husband had work with Colonel Meade and the other officials, and with the merchants, this being the main port for our trade in Western Persia.

It is a curious place. There is a natural dam of rocks across the river, which is here perhaps half a mile broad ; and in the rocks are flour mills, the water rushing through narrow channels in the rocks and turning mill wheels. The mills are, I believe, very old.

The village lies on the left bank of the river, an old village and a new village. The latter has grown up around the landing-place of Messrs. Lynch Bros.' steamers. There is a good house where the Arab Shekh lives, and Lynch Bros. have built themselves another, and the bazaar is increasing fast. From the landing-place a little tramway runs round to the upper side of the dam. The big river

AN AUTUMN TOUR

steamers cannot pass the rocks, but the tramway carries goods round to another landing place—a steep mud bank with a little rough wooden pier. There we found lying a tiny flat stern-wheel steamer, built originally for the Nile, and capable of carrying thirty tons, which runs up, a day's journey, to near Shuster, the capital of Persian Arabistán.

I was not struck by Ahwaz, which seemed to me a dirty little place with nothing attractive about it ; but apparently its trade is increasing, and it promises to be an important place some day.

I am bound to say that while we were in Ahwaz a caravan came in from Ispahan laden with tobacco, having done the journey, in spite of the Godár ford, in eleven days. It might have been on an ocean steamer at Muhammera in a couple of days more, whereas the route by Bushire takes twenty-five days at least. Mr. Taylor and the rest of our party rejoiced over this with a great joy, and I have no doubt they were right in doing so, but it really was too wet and muddy for me to feel any enthusiasm on the subject.

CHAPTER XI

ON the 10th of November we walked round to the landing-place above the dam, and went on board the little steamer *Shushan*, which was to take us up to Shuster. That is to say, we slipped down a high mud bank, and balanced ourselves along a very wet and springy board which connected the shore and the ship.

When we got on board we were received by Captain Norton, a nice kind honest-faced young man, who was the one European on the vessel.

There was a tiny saloon on deck, just big enough for four people to dine together, sitting on the bunks, and there were two or three cabins in the same block. I fear the captain made himself very uncomfortable to make all pleasant for us.

At the stern was a large paddle wheel, which moved the ship. It was explained

AN AUTUMN TOUR

to us that in a river where there was very little water and a great deal of mud, it was a convenience to have the wheel at the stern, so that when you struck on a mud bank—which you generally did nose first—the wheel should be free to paddle you off. And this I found was right in practice as well as reasonable in theory.

The little upper deck was crowded by our people and those of the *Hizhabr ul Mulk*, who had one of the cabins, and the deck below was even more crowded with servants and native passengers and stacks of wood, for the *Shushan* burns no coal. But it was very comfortable and pleasant, especially after weeks of rough travelling on horseback.

All the afternoon we sat in cane chairs and read, as if we were on an ocean steamer, and then we had dinner, which was cooked on a stove somewhere among the wood below, and Captain Norton told us stories of his three years' command of the *Shushan*, stories full of fun and cheeriness and common sense. And then we went to bed, and a blinding storm came on, and

AN AUTUMN TOUR

the noise of the rain and thunder put us to sleep.

The river had been respectable enough all that afternoon, but next day it had completely changed. Very early in the morning we were roused by some shots, and found the Hizhabr ul Mulk, always on the lookout for sport, had seen some wild pig on the bank and was firing at them. When we came on deck we found we had left the Karun, and instead of a river some hundreds of yards broad were navigating a muddy ditch, like a miniature Suez Canal. The banks on both sides were generally steep and sometimes high, with occasional clusters of Arab huts along the top. Wherever there was room to run the Arabs would run alongside, men and women and children, while the captain threw them limes and other fruit to scramble for. He explained that at first the *Shushan* was very unpopular, as an invention of the accursed Feringi, and the natives used to hurl at her insults and stones. They called her the "Red Pig," and were generally tiresome,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

and even fired an occasional shot. Seeing that this was not good for trade the cheery captain took to returning good for evil in the shape of fruit for stones, and very soon he found the vessel hailed with shouts of delight. Now you would think it was the one thing for which the villagers live.

In the same way Captain Norton had tamed his passengers. At first they used to storm the ship and take possession, absolutely refusing to pay any passage money, but they are now orderly enough, though Sayyads, descendants of the Prophet, and others still at times expect to be carried about for nothing.

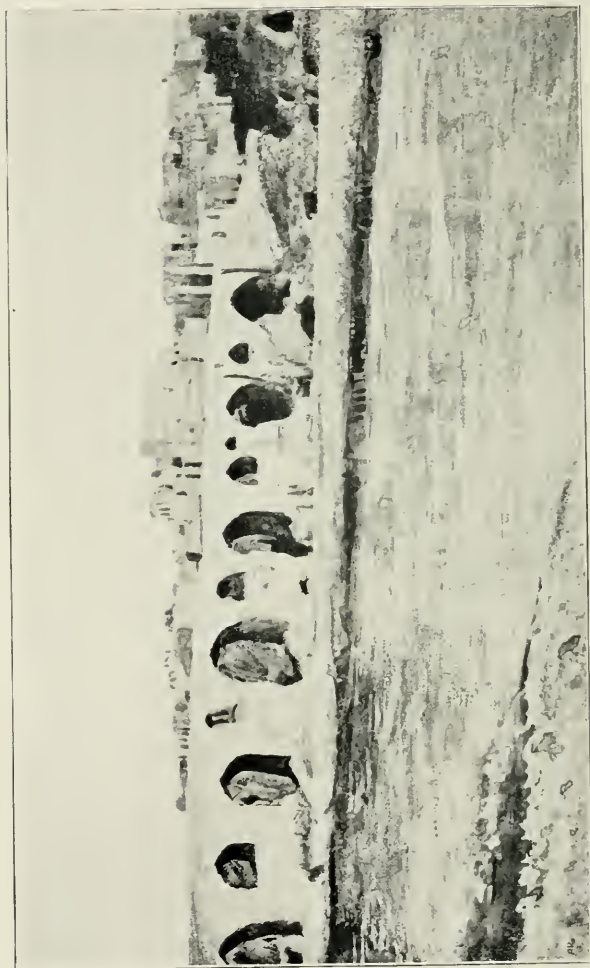
Well, we groped our way up the ditch, the *Ab i Gargar*, until the afternoon, the *Shushan* running her nose into or nearly into a mud bank occasionally, while little brown torrents rushed indignantly at us from either side as if we had no business there. At about 4 o'clock we came round a corner and moored to the bank, and then landed, walking across a barge which we had been towing alongside. It was a strange land-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

ing-place. We scrambled up a steep muddy slope ten or twelve feet high, and found ourselves in a sloppy ploughed field, forming part of the old river bed, under another mud cliff. The water was lying in pools among the mud, and there we searched about for a comparatively dry place and pitched our tiny tents. Some of our horses and servants were awaiting us.

My husband and Mr. Rennie had to go off to shoot—"Must have some exercise before dinner"—so they climbed upon pack mules and disappeared into the sunset, and soon I heard some shots. Mr. Rennie came back with his first black partridge or francolin, a really lovely bird, much too beautiful to shoot, and I think they got some snipe. Next morning, after a quiet night, we said goodbye to Captain Norton and started for Shuster.

Sailors seem to me to be wonderfully good diplomatists. Wherever you meet them, even running a little river steamer of thirty tons on the Karun, it is always the same. Cheery and good tempered, and



THE BRIDGE AT SHUSTER.
From a Photograph by Mr. Rennie.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

never rude or overbearing, and yet as firm as possible, they seem to manage men as hardly any one else does. Wandering about all over the world, and facing all manner of strange chances, and submitting from childhood to iron discipline, seems to develop a type which is exceptionally fitted to deal with Orientals, and indeed with every one else.

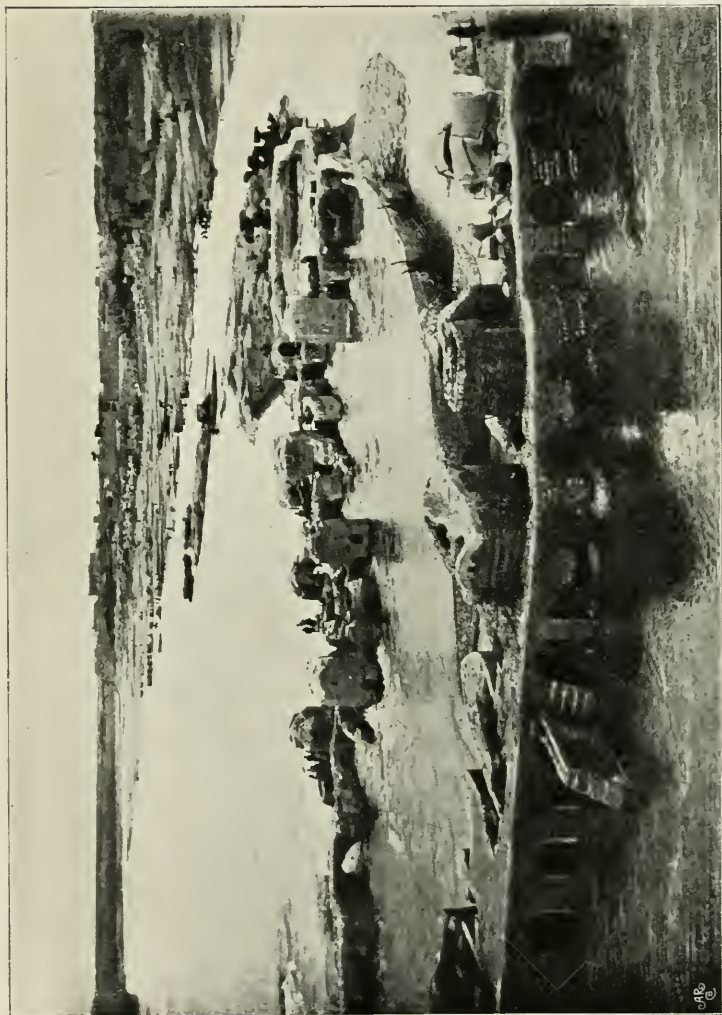
An easy ride of seven or eight miles through a delta between the rivers brought us to Shuster, the capital of Arabistán, and passing through part of an indescribably filthy town of mud houses, the horrors of which I cannot attempt to put on paper, we crossed the river on a skin raft to our camp on the opposite bank. There used to be a fine bridge here, and most of it remains, but one or two arches have given way—"kharáb shud"—and the main stream swirls through the gap. We were poled up laboriously along the bank in the shelter of the bridge piers, and then, pushing out, were carried swiftly down by the brown flood for some fifty yards, when our men managed

AN AUTUMN TOUR

to paddle us into a backwater on the opposite shore.

Our horses and mules had to swim. We lost a horse, drowned. Its head came up three times, poor beast, with the eyes staring wildly, and then it sank into the dragging under-current. We lost a mule too, which got across, but died of exhaustion on the sand.

After breakfast in our tents, my husband and Mr. Rennie went across again to call officially on the Governor of Shuster. It was odd to see Her Majesty's Minister, with frock coat and tall hat and star, sitting on a raft upheld by inflated goat skins, which was being paddled by half a dozen yelling naked Arabs across the stream. However, they returned safely, having had a long chat with the Governor, a nice pleasant-mannered man, who told them that in summer the people all lived in "zír khánehs" or lower apartments from forty to fifty feet below the level of the ground, and that Shuster at that season was "misl i Jehan-num"—which I will not translate.



THE MILLS IN THE RIVER AT SHUSTER.
From a Photograph by Sévroguine, Tehran.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

I did not go into the town again. It was really too horribly dirty, and moreover the Shuster people, who seem to be largely "sayyads," are not fond of strangers. They seem to have been much more friendly fifty years ago, according to the accounts of Englishmen who were then in Persia.

The next morning we started for Dizful, two marches distant, the last town before we re-entered the mountains, and we had a most unpleasant day. We were to camp at a place called Kovnak, about twenty miles off, and were told the road was very good.

We marched out of Shuster along the old river bed, under pebble conglomerate cliffs, and then got upon a plain with the mountains to our right; and it began to rain.

You have to see rain in Arabistán before you know what it is. The wind howled down in gusts from the mountains, which were shrouded in dense cloud, and the water fell in solid sheets, until the road or track was one deep puddle, through which our poor beasts splashed

AN AUTUMN TOUR

along, while we tried in vain to keep something dry about us. I had started in a white riding jacket, as the sun was warm, but put on a waterproof when the rain began. In half an hour or so the white jacket was stained a bright red from the lining of my waterproof, which was about as useful a protection against the rain as if it had been muslin.

In the afternoon there was a break and even a glimpse of blue sky, and we went into a Lur village and had some food in a mud hut. Then it came on to rain worse than ever, and we plodded forward two or three hours more, drenched to the skin, until we arrived at our camping ground. There we pitched our sodden little Kabul tents in pouring rain, and got a brass "mangal" with some wood in it, which we at last persuaded to burn, and sat round it, the three of us, trying to dry ourselves and our clothes. The servants were more comfortable, having got into some village huts, and they gave us quite a good dinner at last.

It rained all night without ceasing, I

AN AUTUMN TOUR

think, and we felt for our poor horses and mules, but in the morning it was fine, and we rode on to Dizful. This place, though rather imposing as one approaches it from the south, is another horribly dirty town, with another muddy river and another long bridge, which, strange to say, was not "kharáb shud." It had been, but some one had repaired it, and though the parapets were down in places and the cobble pavement was in a chaotic condition, we were able to ride over it. I remember a small boy running in front of us and then suddenly jumping over, through a gap in the parapet. He must have fallen fully fifty feet before touching the water, but he came running up to us again before we were over the bridge. Our camp, as at Shuster, was at the other side of the river on open ground away from the town, and in comparatively sanitary surroundings. The Governor of Dizful has a fine garden house close to where our camp was pitched.

The Mullahs have great influence in Dizful. The town is full of small mosques, and, as at Kum, no wine is allowed.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Here we were to halt a day or two to collect mules and supplies for our second march across the mountains, and very glad I was to get the rest.

By this time all idea of shooting lions had been abandoned. Four skins were brought in by Arabs shortly before we arrived in Ahwaz, and the Ahwaz Shekh told my husband he could probably get one if he remained a month or six weeks on the banks of the Diz, a tributary of the Karun, but this was impossible as the winter was coming on, and we had to get back across the mountains. Very reluctantly, therefore, the idea was given up, by no one more reluctantly than the Hizhabr ul Mulk, who was always the keenest of the keen for a chance of sport. Here at Dizful, or just before reaching it, we saw immense numbers of "kulang" or cranes, the Koolan of India. They were wheeling about in lines and flocks in every direction, hundreds of them. In the evening we saw great quantities of wild geese. It must be a fine country for sport.

CHAPTER XII

ALL the 15th of November we stayed in Dizful, resting our animals and making arrangements for collecting supplies. We were told that for the next ten days' march through the mountains we could get nothing whatever, and that we must take grain and bread, and even chopped straw for our animals. This meant a considerable addition to our number of mules, for in ten days a mule eats a large part of the grain and straw it carries. We set our people to work on this, and meanwhile, as they said it would take at least two days, we decided to make an expedition to Susa, the ancient Shushan, where the French are excavating. We had always intended to do so, if possible, and were very glad to get

AN AUTUMN TOUR

the opportunity. The great mound of Susa, or Shúsh as the Persians call it, is clearly visible from the bridge at Dizful, across the plains to the south-west. It looks like a low short blue hill, with a fort on it.

“Shúsh,” I am told, means in old Persian “the pleasant place.” “Shushtar,” the new capital, means “the place that is pleasanter still.” The climate must have changed if the Governor’s account is correct.

At one o’clock on the 16th of November, after my husband had received a visit from the Governor of Dizful, who was very kind and polite, we started to ride out to Shúsh, and had a very pleasant afternoon. It was a picturesque march. Behind us were Dizful and the mountains, covered by dense cloud ; before us a broad open plain, dotted with scrub jungle, and swept by long trailing showers, which drove across the sunlight.

Our guides did not know their way, and took us some miles out of the direct road, but we saw some interesting Arab villages. The inhabitants seemed rather a low type

AN AUTUMN TOUR

of Arab, but the villages were large and rich, with great flocks of goats and sheep and considerable numbers of well-bred horses about them. And we approached Shúsh from the east, with the sunset behind the great mound and fort, which was so striking a view that we forgot and forgave the extra mile or two.

Mr. Rennie and the Hizhabr ul Mulk shot some duck and black partridge on the way. We saw a great number.

After sunset, having ridden through a tract of country covered with mounds, which must have been the remains of a considerable town, we reached the main mound of Shúsh, and found our tents pitched just under it, by the bank of a sluggish stream some twenty yards broad, which washes the so-called tomb of Daniel.

It was too dark to see much then, so we went into our camp, which consisted of two small Kabul tents and a servants' "pál," and waited for dinner. Meanwhile we got a couple of candles, and sitting at the little camp table we read the book of

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Esther. It was damp and shivery, though warm, and some peewits were calling in the darkness around us, and the quiet river flowed within a few feet of our tents, and behind them, a hundred yards away, was the great mound which held the buried remains of the palace of Ahasuerus. Mosquitoes and sand flies tormented us as we read in turn, straining our eyes at the glass shades of the candles; but we got through the whole tragic story, which never came home to me as it did that night, reading it within a few yards of where it all occurred. I felt for Vashti, poor proud Vashti, refusing to be made a show before the drunken nobles.

In the morning we got up from a rather broken sleep, for the mosquitoes had been very troublesome. First we went and saw Daniel's Tomb, which was close by, within a few yards. We found a small masonry courtyard of the meanest kind, now used as a caravanserai, with a sort of shrine attached, and over the shrine one of the curious white pineapple domes which characterize this part of Asia. Over the



DANIEL'S TOMB, SUSA.
From a Photograph by Mr. Rennie.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

door of the shrine was the picture of some one with a sword in his lap, and a Lion and Sun on each side of him. We did not like to go near enough to see clearly and decipher the inscriptions, but others have doubtless done so. The shrine and dome overhang the silent muddy river, and a few date palms and “konár” trees stand about it.

These pineapple domes are curious. They are, so far as I saw, always white, and are formed of tier upon tier of faceted platforms. Each facet is, hollowed, and the point of the facet in the upper tier touches the centre of the hollow in the lower, so that the breadth of the platforms gradually shrinks until the cone arrives at a point. The effect is very pretty.

I wonder whether Daniel really lies here—close to Shushan the palace. Perhaps not, but after all it is on the whole likely enough. Eastern tradition, especially perhaps Jewish tradition, is wonderfully retentive and enduring. At all events, the likelihood is sufficient to make the tomb,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

and Shushan the palace, and Ahasuerus and Vashti and Esther, live for me as they never lived before.

+ The tomb of Esther and Mordecai is at Hamadan, the ancient Ecbatana. Probably the Persian Court migrated in their day, as it does now, from "kishlak" to "yelak," from winter quarters to summer quarters. Low-lying Shushan would have been the winter quarters, as it is now for some of the Lur tribes, and Ecbatana, at an altitude of 6,000 feet, would, though distant, have been pleasanter than Shushan for the summer. I am told that it was in fact the old summer capital.

From Daniel's tomb we climbed up a winding pathway into the fort which the French excavators have built on the very mound of the palace of Ahasuerus. It is a triangular fort, with thick brick walls, in places thirty or forty feet high, and a tower in one angle, and a flagstaff. A servant with a tricolor braiding on his sleeve told us the excavators flew the French flag when they were at Shúsh. They had found it

AN AUTUMN TOUR

necessary to build this rather formidable-looking fort because the neighbouring villages bore a bad reputation and had given them trouble.

They were all away when we visited Susa, and their treasures were locked up. There was nothing to see but the fort and the deep straight cuttings in the mound, and one stray square of marble, perhaps a bit of the old marble floor of Ahasuerus, which was lying in the courtyard of the fort.

Wandering down among the cuttings we saw curious pieces of pottery sticking in the earthen walls. There were earthenware chimneys, or what looked like chimneys, possibly grain stores, and cups and odds and ends. Of course we touched nothing, for the French have been given the exclusive right of "fouillage," as I think they call it, throughout the Persian dominions.

Any one who wishes to form an idea of what the French have found, and to get a correct view of the site, can do so by visit-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

ing the Louvre, where there is a most fascinating collection and a plan of the ground. This however does not show all the latest discoveries.

It was very impressive, the contrast between the place as we saw it and the Shushan of the Bible, the capital of a vast empire at the height of its power, where the Great King feasted his princes and nobles in a palace splendid with silver and gold, and "showed the riches of his glorious kingdom." I shall always remember it as it was that night, the lonely mound surrounded by the desert, a great hazy full moon rising slowly over it, and no sound but the occasional cry of the jackals, or the wail of a plover flitting about us like a departed soul.

On the afternoon of the 17th of November, after an interesting visit, we rode back to Dizful. We struck a shorter road this time, and reached our camp by the bridge before sunset, crossing fewer streams. We again saw many black partridges and duck, and Mr. Rennie and the Hizhabr ul Mulk

AN AUTUMN TOUR

shot some. As we rode we told the Hizhabr ul Mulk the story of Esther. He seemed much interested, and was full of pathetic lament over the nothingness of man and his works.

That night I remember Mr. Andrews, Messrs. Lynch's agent, dined with us, as he had done each night we spent in Dizful. Poor man, he had been sent to Dizful to replace a Persian agent who had died, and was still there, after several months. It struck me as very sad. He was living quite alone, his main occupation the weighing and despatch of sesamum seed, with a cellar forty feet under ground to retire to when the heat grew unbearable. He had poor food, and nothing to drink but tea made from the muddy water of the Diz, and very little to read. Yet he was cheerful and brave, and laughed at his discomforts, and insisted upon presenting us with a box of fresh Egyptian cigarettes out of a batch which had just reached him. After dinner he read to us part of a poem he had addressed to his employers. It was

AN AUTUMN TOUR

meant to make us laugh, and made me more inclined to cry. It ended :

If you do not send an agent
To take over this here pageant,
You will find I am a goner,
In this sad and dismal corner.

Mr. Rennie left with him a good filter, to give him drinkable water and tea, but we could do nothing else for him, and it made us unhappy to leave a solitary Englishman in such a place. I suppose British trade needs such "pageants." He was selling iron and sugar and candles, and "upholding our commercial supremacy."

CHAPTER XIII

WE left Dizful on the 18th of November. Until we started we were in some doubt whether we could get mules enough to carry our ten days' store of provisions and forage, but they did turn up in time, and at 11 o'clock we rode away from the camp. The Persian Governor had been very kind and helpful, as indeed we found the Persian governors throughout our tour. It was a charming march. The sun was bright, and the sky almost cloudless, and a wonderful thing for Persia, we rode over a plain on which were broad grassy patches of emerald green, over which our horses galloped with wild enjoyment.

Then we entered the lower part of the mountain range which we had to recross before reaching Tehran, and after a clam-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

ber over stony ravines and gypsum hills arrived at our camp—an ideal camp.

It was pitched on turf, actual turf—quite flat—probably the old bed of the stream which now lay a hundred feet below. Looking down over the edge, one had to climb a little way down to see it, was a beautiful big pool, overhung by rocks—deep green water and pebbly shallows, with fish swimming about them. Between us and the pool we noticed a curious carved platform, with long rows of cup-shaped markings. My husband climbed down and examined the rocks, and came to the conclusion that the markings were not real “cup marks” but comparatively recent, and made possibly by the tents of the Lurs. They were curiously regular and systematic.

He and Mr. Rennie walked down the bed of the river to an old bridge some hundreds of yards below our camp, and came back without game, but full of a discovery. I have already described the rock barriers at Ahwaz and the mill sluices in them. These exist at Shuster and perhaps other points on

AN AUTUMN TOUR

the Karun. Well, just above the old bridge, which is a fine solid broken ruin with no approaches, they came upon a reach where the bed of the stream was formed by soft sandstone rock, on which they walked. The river was then low, and the top of the rock was exposed. They found that it was scored with numberless channels, narrow and deep, which had been worn by rolling stones. Some of these stones were still at work, rolling over and over and grinding the rock bed and hollowing out mill sluices. Here and there a handful of hard pebbles had caught in a hollow and been whirled round and round by the water until they formed a perfectly round hole in the rock, like a golf hole, but in general the rock was scored with deep straight channels. Hence perhaps the origin of the mill sluices cut through the rocky bars of the Karum.

What a lovely camp that was! We were facing west, across the river, over a flat smooth stretch of close turf. A little after six the full moon rose behind us, while before us was the orange sunset, which

AN AUTUMN TOUR

gradually faded as the evening star came out above it. The air was warm, but pleasant, and as the darkness gathered the rattle of the mule combs was sounding, and the servants' camp fires became visible, and from them came the murmur of voices and the tinkle and boom of the mule bells. It was very delightful.

Before we started from Dizful to recross the mountains the Governor of Arabistán had sent to us two Lur chiefs of the Derekwand section, who had promised to act as our guides and protectors. They were very picturesque and altogether charming, and I must try to describe them.

The head man of the two, by name Mir Haji Khan, was I think the blackest figure I ever saw. He wore a black felt cap surrounded by a wisp of black cloth. He had coal-black hair, and a long black beard, and a very dark face with black eyes. He was clothed in a black gaberdine which looked liked alpaca, and loose black trousers and boots, and he rode a little thin coal-black mare, which carried him over stones and



DEREKWAND CHIEFS.

From a Photograph by Mr. Rennie.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

rocks as if she had wings. There was nothing not black about him except the whites of his laughing eyes, and the straight teeth which gleamed through his moustache.

His supporter and cousin, Mir Mata Khan, was equally black in appearance, but walked instead of riding, and his eyes and teeth were even merrier.

Each had a good Martini rifle slung over his broad back, and a row of cartridges round his waist.

At Balarud these chiefs came to us and asked us to get "their blood" from a man who had lately killed one of their clansmen, and taken refuge with a neighbouring chief. "Khun i má bigirid" they said—"Take our blood." They told us that they were very anxious about our safety, and were going to take great care of us. The Governor they said had warned them that if anything went wrong with us they would be flayed alive. Evidently they did not regard this as an empty threat.

From the time we re-entered the moun-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

tains all our people had to keep together, as marching in small parties was unsafe.

The next morning we got up early, while the nearly full moon was high in the western sky, and the dew was on the grass, and the sky of the east was red with the coming sunrise. We had a long march, over grassy undulating ground and in and out of deep ravines. I remember that we had our breakfasts by the side of a stream in the Tiktik or Chikchik valley. Above us, across the stream, was a clay cliff, perhaps a hundred feet high, with a broken waterfall coming down from it, and at the top a line of reeds, waving with the sunlight behind them, and maidenhair fern among the waterdrip.

We reached our camp in the evening, after a pleasant ride of six or seven hours. Behind us all day was a curious flat topped hill called Kala Kazi, or Kala Kasim, very long and very high. The precipice at the top has partly fallen, and a great rectangular pillar, perhaps a hundred, perhaps two hundred feet high, stands up against the cloudless blue. It is impossible to judge of

AN AUTUMN TOUR

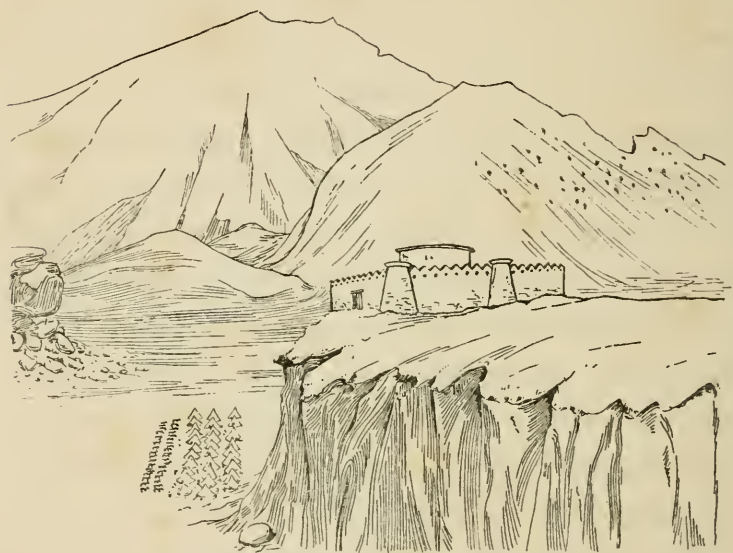
heights in these immense distances and in this extraordinarily clear air, but we thought the hill must be fully a thousand feet above us. We saw it for days. It is mentioned by Rawlinson, I think.

We camped at Kala Reza, where the road debouches into a fine broad valley, bounded on the left by the Kuh-i-Kebír, the "great mountain," which our Derekwand chief said "went to Baghdad." It really divides Luristan from the Pusht i Kuh, another wild mountain province of Persia. It showed us a bold wave-like slope, ending in precipices, like many of the Lur hills. One side of these hills is often a gentle rocky slope—perhaps dotted with oaks, perhaps quite bare. When you reach the top of the slope you find at your feet a sheer drop, sometimes of several hundred feet.

We climbed up in the evening to the old fort of Kala Reza, and enjoyed the sunset over the Kuh-i-Kebír, and then we came down to the camp, which was pitched by a great reed bed. I remember that before dinner one of the people in camp asked us for some med-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

icine for his eyes, which had got burnt by the glare. I gave him some boric tabloids, to dissolve one at a time in water, and told him that they were to last at least a week. Soon afterwards my husband came into



KALA REZA AND THE KUH-I-KEBÍR.

the dinner-tent laughing, and told us the man had eaten them like sugar plums, and said his eyes were much better.

The Lur chiefs told us this evening that an Englishman or European without arms or legs came here forty years ago and spent some

AN AUTUMN TOUR

months in these hills. He was carried about in a "kejaveh" on a mule, and where a mule could not go he got upon the back of a Lur. This was, I believe, Mr. Kavanagh, of Boris, so well known in England and Ireland.

The same evening the poor fat charvadar who had gone mad at Kuhrud from eating melons, caught us up. He looked quite well again, but had been robbed and stripped by Lurs.

I shall never forget that camp at Kala Reza. When we got up in the early morning we heard that a runner had come in from Dizful during the night, bringing us some newspapers and telegrams which Colonel Meade had kindly promised to send after us. It was the 20th of November and we had had no news of the war or of our son since the 10th. Now it had come, and we read it in the morning light, while the mules were being loaded, and the great reed bed before us blazed and crackled. The Lurs had set it on fire. Alas, the news was very bad ! There was nothing from our son, but Ladysmith was surrounded

AN AUTUMN TOUR

and invested, and the Gloucesters and the Royal Irish had been hemmed in by the Boers and taken prisoners, and Mafeking and Kimberly were besieged. It was a sad send-off into the mountains, where we could not hope to get further news for ten days or more. We had known both General Symons and Sir George White in old days. The former, though even then a distinguished soldier, had not been too proud to succeed my husband temporarily as Colonel commanding a battalion of Volunteers. Anything for the good of the country.

With our sad post we received a telegram from Mr. Spring Rice at Tehran, and a kind message of inquiry from the Persian Prime Minister. After answering them we marched off again with heavy hearts, to recross the great range.

Sad as we were, we found the day interesting. As we left Kala Reza to march up the great valley with the Kuh-i-Kebír on our left we came upon the head of the Sagwand tribe of Lurs, who were marching down to their winter quarters in the low-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

lands. It was a most striking sight. As far as one could see up the long valley stretched a dark moving line, thousands of sheep and goats and donkeys and small highland cattle, and hundreds of ponies, with men and women and children here and there driving the animals. The men were wild-looking creatures, all in black or very dark clothes, some of them well armed with breech-loading rifles. The women had long hanging side locks and were dressed chiefly in dark indigo dyed dresses which were open in front, showing the breast. A few were pretty, or might have been if they had been clean. These were favourite wives, no doubt, and were mounted on ponies, with good carpet rugs thrown over their pack saddles. The older and plainer women walked. The children were delightful little black-eyed savages. The whole tribe looked cheery, though poor, and among the constant "Hava, hava, hava" with which they encouraged their animals we heard a perpetual ripple of laughter and talk.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Once, being halted in a rocky narrow, I said "Hava, hava, hava" to some of the women, and they came running round me laughing and gesticulating as if I had mastered their language.

We could not estimate the numbers of the tribe, but the Derekwand chiefs said the Sagwands were a very big tribe, and could turn out large numbers of horsemen in their winter quarters near Susa. The total was put at four thousand families, or from twenty to thirty thousand souls. The Sagwand chief, whom we met next day, was said to ride about the country with twenty-four stalwart sons at his back.

The temptation of our baggage mules was too much for our Sagwand friends. During that day's march we came upon a rocky valley, where we had to cross a river, the Ab i zal, or Water of Zal, by a very picturesque bridge. Two masonry pillars twelve or fourteen feet high and a mile or so apart mark the crossing, which one might otherwise easily miss. Descending by a very rocky and stony cañon we

AN AUTUMN TOUR

passed through two steps of the old stone bed, each perhaps fifty feet in depth, and reached the little steep single arch bridge which overhung the river, perhaps another fifty feet below.

The river contracts here to a breadth of little over ten feet, and looks intensely blue and



BRIDGE OVER THE AB I ZAL.

deep. We noticed the remains of four other bridges close by, all apparently destroyed or blocked by the fall of the pebble cliffs.

As we came out from the bed of the stream by the second pillar we found ourselves in a scene of wild excitement. Our servants and the Lurs were gesticulating and abusing one another, while some hundreds of yards away the horsemen of our escort were galloping wildly across the stony plain, led by the Hizhabr ul Mulk. It seems that two of our mules had got separated from the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

rest, and the Lurs had levelled their rifles at the muleteers and driven off the animals. Mr. Rennie galloped away to join in the chase, and we sat down by the edge of the track, near the western pillar, and had some breakfast, while the living stream of men and animals flowed past us. Some of the Lurs were very curious about us, and crowded round rather too close to be pleasant, for with all their attractive qualities they are not clean. My little dog seemed to be a special object of interest, and one young Lur who stood gazing at us for some time leaning on his rifle, asked in Persian, "What is that thing? That thing of silk?" He seemed much surprised, and rather incredulous, when told it was a dog. They have charming dogs of their own, just like our old English sheepdogs.

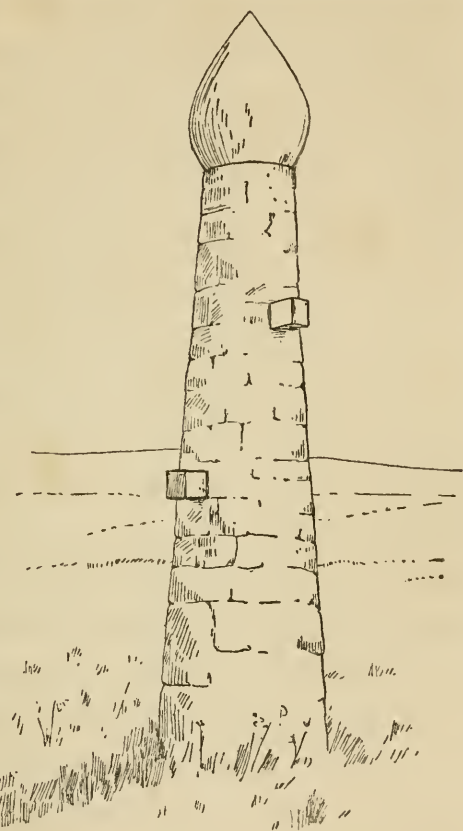
After two hours Mr. Rennie and the escort came back. They had recovered the two mules, but the loads were gone.

Then we started again, the Sagwands and our Derekwand guides having roundly abused one another, each declaring that the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

other tribe was guilty of the theft. Months afterwards the things were recovered from the Sagwands by the Governor of Arabistán.

That afternoon we climbed in and out of the valley of the Karkah river by a series of gypsum cliffs, at times close to the water, at times several hundred feet above, until we came to our camping ground near the place where the Karkah issues from the sloping side of the Kuh-i-Kebir.



PILLAR SHOWING THE PASSAGE OVER
THE 'AB I ZAL.

This is a most striking spot. The river, which a stone's throw below is a fine rapid

AN AUTUMN TOUR

stream eighty yards broad and not fordable for horses, breaks out through a deep cleft in the solid rock, which is carved into fantastic scoops and ledges. The ledges almost or quite overlap in parts, and it is not difficult for a man to jump across. The water at most points can be neither seen nor heard. About sixty feet above the water level was a single arch bridge, the "Pul i Tang," or narrow bridge. This is overflowed at times, and there are marks of water action on the rocks above it. Looking down from the bridge one can see the water, very blue and quite silent. It must be immensely deep.

These very deep clefts in the sloping oak dotted hill sides, with rivers issuing from them, are characteristic of the Lur and Bakhtiari country. I have never seen them elsewhere.

There is a very sacred Imamzáda or shrine on the Kuh i Kebír above Pul i Tang, and the chiefs told us "no Lur would tell a lie if made to swear by it." We could see a white dot high up on the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

lonely mountain side. The Lurs seem little given to religious practices, and this



THE PUL I TANG.

was, I think, the only thing of the kind we saw in Luristan.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Close by the bridge are some ruined buildings and the remains of a stone causeway, which is said to be very ancient.

At Pul i Tang we had a great palaver with our Derekwand guides, who were much upset by the looting of our mules, and begged us to change our route and march through their country by the difficult Kialan pass, instead of marching by an easier route, round the Kialan mountain, as we had intended to do. The latter route was the one generally used by the tribes moving down to their winter quarters, and our guides said that behind the Sagwand were coming the Bernwand, a bigger and a stronger clan than the Sagwand "and even greater robbers."

We did not want to change, as the longer and easier route seemed the more likely trade route, and the Derekwand chiefs said they would stick to us, whatever we might decide. They accordingly sent men into the mountains to collect their clansmen, and some fifty or sixty armed men were got to-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

gether. The Hizhabr ul Mulk, as usual, was cheery and confident, and quite ready to go by any route we pleased. That night we had a regular cordon of pickets out, and rifles were kept handy in our tents in case of accidents, but nothing happened.

However, we were obliged to make the change after all. Starting early the next morning we soon met the Sagwand chief Mir Ali Khan, and he and my husband and the Derekwands discussed the situation, sitting on their horses, surrounded by the tribesmen, in an open bit of the road. Mir Ali Khan, who was a picturesque figure, handsomely dressed and well mounted, was very decided in his opinion. He said the Bernwand were just behind his people, and that they would certainly try to loot us ; and that as they were twice his strength, eight thousand households against four thousand, he did not want to be drawn into a quarrel with them on our account. He was civil enough, but independent, and quite determined. In fact he practically declined to give us any help, and told us that if we

AN AUTUMN TOUR

meant to go on we must trust to the Derekwand for protection. This settled the question. My husband did not think it was fair to the Derekwand, who had behaved very well, to involve them in trouble, and after a quarter-of-an-hour's discussion he said, "Very well, you ought to know best—we will go over the Kialan." The Derekwand seemed intensely cheered and pleased at this decision, and the Hizhabr ul Mulk acquiesced.

We slept that night close to our former camp, and marched on next morning, away from the tribal route, to the foot of the Kialan mountain. I shall not quickly forget that march. It was only eight miles, but it took us nearly four hours. It was one long scramble over boulders. Occasionally we came upon shale, which was a relief, but generally we were toiling along the bed of a torrent or across rock slopes. The sun and rain break the surface rock of these slopes into big sharp cornered blocks, and these slide down and make a chaos, which is very hard to work through. The

AN AUTUMN TOUR

horses and mules fell more than once, and we had to walk.

That night we camped at Sar i Shigaft, the Head of the Cave, in an oak wood at the foot of a tremendous precipice, across the face of which we were to climb next day. It looked alarming, but our guides were exceedingly happy. They said that the pass was quite easy, and that we had nothing but their own country before us now. After my husband and Mr. Rennie had come in from their evening walk after partridges I remember the Derekwands gathered round and brought their weapons to be examined. They were mostly English Martinis, but there were also Belgian and Austrian rifles, and an American Martini Peabody. They seemed much disappointed whenever a rifle turned out to be not of English make.

CHAPTER XIV

OUR night at Sar i Shigaft was fine, but the morning broke cloudy and dark, with a little rain, and at dawn when we started off our Píshkháneh, the task before us did not look inviting.

The immense precipice above us consisted of a series of rock cliffs, separated from one another by ledges or slopes, some of which were dotted with oaks. Here and there narrow chimneys ran up the face of the cliffs, and the Lurs told us that by the help of these they could scale the precipice in an hour and a half or two hours. I could not guess the height, but I see that General Schindler, who passed over this route more than twenty years ago, gives it as about 1,300 feet above Sar i Shigaft.

At one point the lowest cliff, or perhaps two or three of the lowest cliffs, had fallen, forming a huge sloping fan of boulders,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

which extended for some distance down the oak-clad slopes at the foot of the precipice. By taking advantage of this fan one could climb upon a ledge above the lowest line of cliff, and then passing along this ledge one could turn the shoulder of the mountain.

As we started ourselves, having seen the last of our animals out of camp, our pishkháneh had reached the top of the boulder fan, and had come out upon the slope above the cliff. They looked like a line of ants, crawling slowly along a narrow ledge which overhung a very unpleasant-looking drop, and we did not much like the prospect of following them.

However it had to be done, and turned out to be much less formidable than it looked. The worst part was the climb up the boulder fan. This took us over an hour and a half, and was very hard work. There was no attempt at a road, and one had to scramble on foot through the big sharp-edged boulders. The horses and mules slipped and floundered constantly and cut their legs in the most painful way. In

AN AUTUMN TOUR

the last day's march there had been many drops of blood along the track, but on this march it would hardly be too much to say that the track was marked with blood at every step. The poor head muleteer was crying bitterly at the injury done to his mules, and it was hardly to be wondered at. Only the Derekwand chief ventured to remain on horseback. His little black mare picked her way quite easily, stepping or jumping from boulder to boulder like a goat, when all the rest were struggling and floundering.

“Ádat i sang dárád,” the man said, “She is accustomed to stones.” It looked very dangerous.

Persian horses are not shod like ours, but with a soft plate of iron, covering nearly all the foot, a small circular hole being left in the middle. This method of shoeing no doubt protects the feet on stony ground, but I should have thought it would make them slip. It does not seem to do so.

As I have said, the fan was the worst

AN AUTUMN TOUR

part of the pass, and when we left the shelter of the boulders and came out upon the dreaded ledge we found the track was fairly broad and not easy to fall off. It lay across a steep slope, with a few trees dotted about it. Below the slope was a bad drop, perhaps a hundred feet, but except at one point there was really no danger.

At this point a large rock had fallen from above, and settled upon the track, blocking it entirely. To get over the difficulty the Lurs had built a rough bridge of branches and stones which went round the rock on the outside. It was very narrow, and each horse or mule had to be helped round by hand.

Far above us, over the top of the precipice, almost out of sight, some eagles or lammergeyers were wheeling in the sky.

The passage of the ledge took us only a quarter of an hour, and then we had no further difficulty. The road was still rough and stony, but nothing like the other side ; there were signs that it had once been cleared, and it passed in great measure

AN AUTUMN TOUR

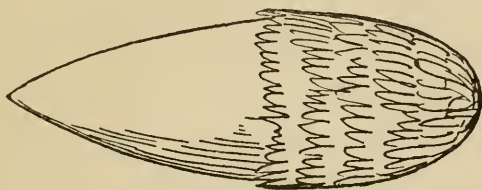
through oak woods, so that there was no danger or trouble to weak nerves.

We spent that night at the far side of the Kialan, under another immense rock slip, which had carried away almost the whole side of the mountain face. There seemed to be quantities of game. My husband and Mr. Rennie spent the evening in pursuing partridges, and the Lurs went off with their guns and soon brought in two ibex. They told us there were bears and leopards on these hills, and it seems likely enough. Here I got some milk, the first I had tasted for many days. My husband had given a hundred rifle cartridges to Mir Mata Khan, and he went off across the hills to his home, walking all night, and returned in the morning with a large bowl of milk, which he presented to me with a smile. The Lurs like to wear a double row of cartridges round their bodies, and these are hard to get and expensive, so the gift of a few is much appreciated.

Our next day's march was a very easy one. We had to cross one of the lower

AN AUTUMN TOUR

ranges, and we rode on over what was almost a natural pavement, at a very gentle slope, dotted here and there with oaks and patches of grass. At one place we came upon a man eating some acorn bread, and my husband ate some. He said it "wasn't bad—tasted of nothing in particular." I



A BELÚT ACORN (LIFE SIZE).

did not try. It looked very nasty, I thought. But the acorns are not bitter like our English acorns. They are large and comparatively sweet, and are soaked for a long time before the bread or cake is made. We saw no villages in this country, and very little remains of cultivation. There were a few black felt tents under the oak trees here and there, miles apart, but no other signs of life.

At our halting place, Mukhbarabad, the Kialan mountain now lay extended behind

AN AUTUMN TOUR

us. As seen from here, the central or main block, which is flat topped, has a curious resemblance to a gigantic ram breasting the waves.

At this place the Derekwand chief brought a small son of his to see me. He seemed very shy and wild, poor little fellow, like a young wolf cub, and I could not get him to talk, but when I offered him a knife he snatched at it and hid it in his breast. We found that all over the hills three things were greatly valued : firearms, knives, and field telescopes or binoculars. The Lurs care for nothing else but what is useful for fighting or hunting.

I noticed some curious raised tombs near Mukhbarabad. They were hollow, with a small entrance or doorway on one side, and were said to be tombs of chiefs.

The tombs varied much during our march. Near Tehran one sees little beyond a heap of stones over the grave, with an occasional carved upright piece or horizontal slab. Then we came upon the rock sepulchres at Kuhrud, which I have de-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

scribed before. After this, in the Bakhtiari country, we used to see standing lions roughly carved out of stone, said to be the tombs of chiefs or brave men. At Dizful the graves were covered with large slabs, sometimes with pretty coloured tiles, bearing names.

The next day's march was toilsome, as we had to cross two ranges by the Lesser Kialan and Dalich passes. As we were scrambling over the former, Mata Khan said to us, "We Lurs call it the Bukan, but in the world it is known as the Bacha i Kialan," or Child of the Kialan. In the afternoon we got into our camping place at Ab i Sard, or Cold Water—a place fitly named. It was raining hard when we marched in, and it continued to rain the whole evening and night, a real deluge which turned the camping place into a swamp, inches deep in mud and water. Through this the unfortunate servants had to wade about, getting up their tents and ours, and bringing in dinner. They managed somehow to light large fires, and got comfortable

AN AUTUMN TOUR

enough eventually, but these are the occasions when camping out, especially camping in Kabul tents, is not unmixed pleasure. Do what you will, everything gets dirty and damp, if not wet ; and tempers are short. But the Persian servants were wonderfully patient and cheerful through it all. Discomfort does not seem to worry them as it does Europeans, or they take it more philosophically.

Throughout the night the rain roared upon our canvas roof, and the thunder storms came booming and crashing along the oak clad ridge behind our camp until one was almost deafened with the noise.

It was the same next morning, and we started in our waterproofs with a thunderstorm following us. During the day it cleared up, and we had a pretty march along the banks of the Afrina stream. But in the evening the rain came on again, and when we had pitched our tents under a great crag at a place called Chimeshk my husband and Mr. Rennie and I had to wait

AN AUTUMN TOUR

for hours, crouching over a pan of charcoal in a tiny tent while our servants tried to make up a fire to cook some food. It was rather annoying at this place, because there was an old serai in fair preservation. But a provincial treasure guard had marched on ahead of us and had occupied the whole of the building, and our poor servants and horses had to remain in the rain and the mud. The Hizhabr ul Mulk explained that the guard was composed of a very wild set of people, and he did not care to get into an altercation with them.

I remember that the want of and longing for news from the war came upon us strongly in this camp, and made the time seem very dreary. But we could hope for nothing for some days to come.

Next day it was fairly fine. Rain and snow storms were on the hills close to us, but there were patches of sunlight, and we felt that the worst of our march was over, for that day we were to reach Khurramabad, the headquarters of the Governorship of Luristan, where supplies could be obtained

AN AUTUMN TOUR

for man and beast. We had just enough food to take us in.

It was a beautiful march, over the grassy uplands and forest glades which form the summer headquarters of the Derekwand and other clans. At times one could have cantered for miles over actual grass, and here and there one could have fancied oneself in an English park.

Towards evening a sudden turn in the road brought us into view of Khurramabad itself. Looking down from a rocky corner we saw, perhaps a thousand feet below us, a fine flat valley about twenty miles in length, and half as much in breadth. To the left was the Safid Kuh or white mountain range, fine lofty masses of rock and crag, the top of the precipices powdered with snow. Dark clouds lay above and behind them, and heavy snow-storms were raging on the mountains both to right and left. The valley was in bright sunshine, and in a gorge opposite to us stood out the picturesque castle and town of Khurramabad—trees in front of it, and behind it a dark craggy range, the Kuh i Makmal

AN AUTUMN TOUR

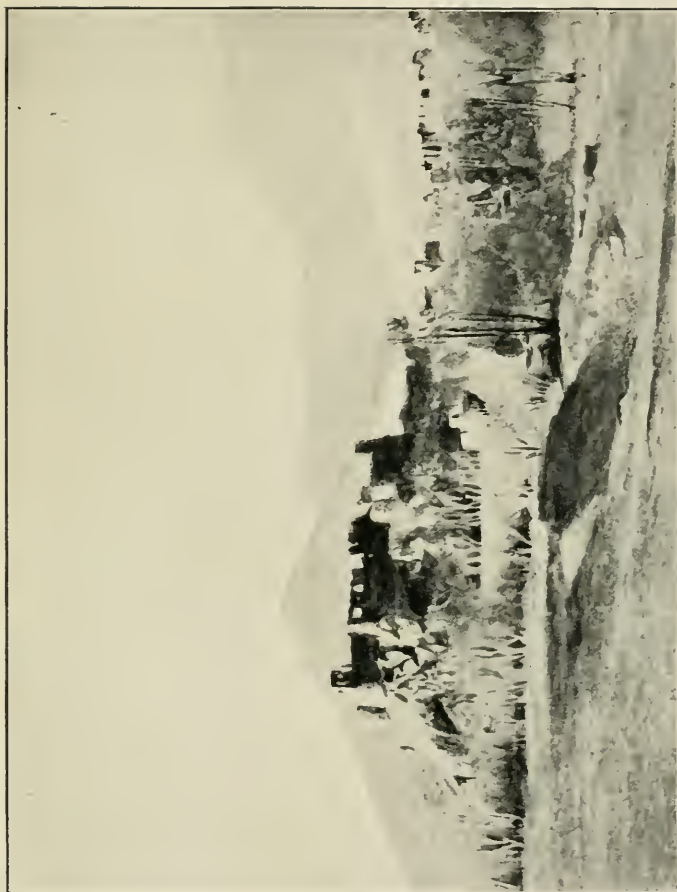
or velvet hill, backed by another range covered with snow. In the plain were a few villages. The road ran straight across the valley from under our feet, passing through a white river bed half way.

We climbed down past the pretty mosque and serai of Shah in Shah, and had a long gallop across the plain, getting in eventually just after sunset. Very glad we were to get in, for all round us were the mountains, and the winter was evidently near.

At Khurramabad we halted one day to rest men and animals, and get their wants supplied as far as possible. We were very kindly received by the Governor, the Zafr ul Mulk, and lodged in the fort. Alas ! the fort, a fine old building, was in ruins—"kharáb shud"—as usual, but we were most warm and comfortable in the garden house at the foot of the walls, though in the morning the reservoir of water outside our windows was hard frozen. In summer Khurramabad is said to be very hot, and as the altitude is little over 4,000 feet, this is probable.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

The Governor of Luristan and Arabistán, His Royal Highness the Ain ud dowleh, a relative of the Shah, was out in camp some twenty miles off the road over which we had passed, and he had sent us a pressing invitation to come and see him in his camp. But this we could not do, as we had only just supplies enough to carry us into Khurramabad by the direct route, and from there my husband would not risk going back. He and the Prince therefore exchanged compliments by proxy, one of the Prince's messengers being curiously enough a Kurd doctor who had finished his medical education in London and was a Christian. This man told us that he had never been molested on account of his change of faith, which he said was due not to missionary teaching but to a chance encounter with a Nestorian from over the Turkish border. He taught the Nestorian Persian, and the Nestorian in return taught him Syriac out of a Syriac Bible. This led him to read the book and he came to the conclusion it was true. Then he went to



KHURRAMABAD. THE FORT.
From a Photograph by Mr. Rennie.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

the American missionaries at Hamadan, who were very kind to him and sent him to England.

Khurramabad, the old capital of the Atabegs, is a picturesque place, beautifully situated, and should be very rich, but of late years the townspeople have been afraid to grow their crops on account of Lur raids, and the land all round has fallen out of cultivation.

At Khurramabad we said good-bye to our trusty friends the Derekwand chiefs. My husband gave them among other things a magazine rifle and a shot gun, and told them one was for shooting ibex and the other for shooting partridges, neither for shooting men. They flashed their white teeth merrily at the warning, and kissed our hands and seemed really sorry to leave us. The Lowlanders say all Lurs are treacherous savages, and that our guides would have cut our throats but for the hope of money, but I do not believe it. You cannot mix with them and see their ways without getting to know something of their character. Ruf-

AN AUTUMN TOUR

fians there are among them, no doubt, and of course they are all robbers, the Derekwand especially, I am told, but they were charming in their behaviour towards us, and I feel sure they have many good points in them. The Lowland dislike of Highlanders is universal. It is not so many years since I heard of an old Lowland Scot who used to maintain that a Highlander was of no use except to steal hens.

CHAPTER XV

ON the 29th of November we marched out of Khurramabad. It was difficult to get away, for our servants and muleteers were determined to get another day's rest if possible, and the Hizhabr ul Mulk too, who had ridden out to visit the Prince Governor, and had had no rest at all, was anxious to stay. But we had some high ground to pass over during the next week, and the snow was all around us. It would have been imprudent to risk being caught by winter on the passes. The event proved how necessary it was to push on.

The Prince Governor, finding we were determined to go, sent with us the Governor of Khurramabad and other officials, and we started.

Marching out across the fine bridge of Khurramabad, three hundred yards long, we turned to our right and skirted the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Velvet Hill. It was easy then to understand how the name had come to be given. The morning sun touched the yellow grass which lay in patches here and there among the dark masses of rock, and gave the whole a sheen which made it look singularly like deep olive-green velvet.

We crossed the Kuh i Makmal by a fine wild rocky pass, after a long gallop over some downs, and then having eaten our lunch by the edge of a pretty little mountain stream, we climbed over the Zagha Gardani, a high-lying pass where we had to march through patches of snow. On the other side of the pass was the village of Zagha, and here we had to sleep.

We had been warned that we should find it very cold, and the warning was certainly true. I think I never felt the cold so bitterly. We arrived at sunset. Some of our tents had come in and one had been put up, but it was still flapping in the wind, and such a wind ! It seemed to cut one in two through all one's wraps. The ground under us was freezing mud. It had thawed

AN AUTUMN TOUR

a little in the afternoon, but was now freezing again. Our men had had no time to make fires, and as we sat in the shelter of the flapping canvas I felt chilled to the bone.

Unluckily, too, the return to cold high ground had brought back my troublesome asthma, which had almost left me in the warm soft climate of the Arab plains.

Going to the camp we had passed Zagha, a few dirty mud huts clustering round a mound, and I had indignantly spurned the notion of going into one of them for shelter. But a few minutes of our tent persuaded me. The rest of the party had been in the village prospecting, and they came back with accounts of a warm room and a wood fire, which were too tempting to be resisted. Stiff and cold I followed them across the freezing mud, and resigned myself to anything. It really was not so bad. We climbed up a dirty passage between mud huts, over every kind of horror, and then stooped through a low doorway, and found ourselves in a little narrow room, with a mud fireplace at the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

end. The walls were smoke-blackened mud, but some wet wood was beginning to light, and one was at least on dry ground and out of the bitter wind. The cold I think prevented the smaller inhabitants from troubling, and after a time the fire blazed up, and the servants brought us some dinner. And then we had our camp beds made ready, and slept the sleep of tired people. The owners of the room came and peeped at us through the doorway, over which we had hung a rug, but they were happy in the sum they got for the accommodation they gave us, and were not uncivil. The Hizhabr ul Mulk had found another hut. Mr. Rennie bravely returned to the tents.

We were quite loth to leave our warm quarters next morning, when we stepped out on the frozen ground and remounted our horses.

It was a long ride, but fine, and we enjoyed it. We passed through a broad grassy valley, the Harru, the most northerly ground occupied by the Lurs, and the headquarters of the Persian force in Luristan,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

which was said to amount to 5,000 men. This is the summer home of the Bernwand and other sections. It was very beautiful, the yellow hills with the grass sheen on them rising into the snow. And then we came to a place called Rajan, where we were hospitably received by an old Lur headman, Sartip Reza Khan, who had given up the black tents of his clan and became a "deh nishín," or sitter in a village. He gave us a splendid breakfast in a room with a fire—omelet and pilau and partridges. We had no knives or forks or plates, our servants having made a mistake and gone on, and we had to eat on the floor; but some one produced a broken penknife, and our host gave us two or three small saucers and teaspoons, and we had a real feast. I remember that Mr. Rennie carved partridges with the penknife and a teaspoon in the most skilful manner possible.

A good many of the Lurs are giving up their tents now and becoming "deh nishín," though they are despised for it by the bulk of the tribesmen. They certainly gain in

AN AUTUMN TOUR

comfort, for the black Lur tent is poor shelter against rain or wind. It is often little more than a big blanket stretched over a rough ridge pole and fastened down on both sides to a wall of piled stones. In fine weather, on the march, the Lurs often have nothing over their heads, but content themselves with putting up a circle of reed matting, about four feet high, which gives a family sufficient privacy.

These Lurs are wilder than their Bakhtiari kinsmen. They have no single chief or ruling family, and are very independent. The Persian Governor of Khurramabad told us they numbered in all 70,000 families, or from 350,000 to 400,000 souls.

After leaving Rajan we rode on up a very cold pass, and suddenly we saw beneath us the Silakhor valley, at the end of which lies Burujird. I have seen few things finer than the view at this point. To our right was the Shuturan Kuh, a grand snowy mountain, the northern limit of the Bakhtiariis. From the base of it stretched a green valley, perhaps thirty miles long,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

ringed round with snow-covered ranges. A river, our old friend the Diz, ran through it, looking very blue in the sunlight, and numerous villages dotted the level plain.

Somewhere about here is the boundary between the highlands and lowlands, between the Lur country and the Persian Governorship of Burujird. But there are many Lur villages in Burujird.

We had a long climb down to the valley, and then crossing the river we came to the village of Chulan Chulan, where very comfortable quarters had been prepared for us by the land owner, a pleasant and hospitable gentleman. Though it froze at night the climate seemed delightful to us after the cold of the mountains, and we revelled in the luxury of potatoes for dinner.

My husband and Mr. Rennie wandered round in the evening and investigated the village, and found some storks' nests, which interested them ; but I was only too thankful to get a rest and a long night's sleep after dinner. The villagers said the storks were holy birds, and came every year from

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Mecca. We found that the same legend prevailed at Kum, where storks build on the summits of ruined domes.

We lay in bed quite late next morning, as we had a flat galloping march across the valley, and it was something like mid-day before we started. It was really delicious. The air was soft and balmy, and the birds were chirping around us, and countless teams of oxen were ploughing in the fields. As we cantered on mile after mile along the firm springy track I felt that our difficulties were nearly over, and something told me that at the end of our ride we should get news of the war and of home.

By this time we had got several new horses, and I had to ride them all in turn. Of course none had ever had a side saddle on, but Eastern horses never seem to mind a side saddle much. The only drawback about them is that they are all accustomed to a very severe bit with a high port, which cuts their mouths dreadfully. When you first ride them with an English bit they think they have nothing in their mouths, and are

AN AUTUMN TOUR

apt to pull. This however is soon put right as a rule.

We arrived at Burujird before sunset, and were received with much kindness and honour by the Governor, who lodged us in the Government building, a very comfortable nice house, in a large garden, and there we found a mass of letters and newspapers sent to us from the Legation—practically the first post we had had for over two months since we left Tehran. Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking were still untaken, and troops were beginning to land at Durban and the Cape, and our boy was not among the list of casualties. It was a happy evening.

CHAPTER XVI

ANOTHER desperate effort was made to stop us at Burujird, where all our people dearly wanted to halt a day or two ; but again we were obdurate, and on the 3rd of December we rode out of the town, and struck across the frost-bound country for the passes towards Sultanabad. Once we could reach that haven, beyond the mountain ranges, it did not matter what happened. Frost and snow on the plateau of central Persia with something like roads to march over would not trouble us. Snow in the mountains might mean days or weeks of delay, for at times the passes are entirely blocked. Burujird itself is at an altitude of over 5,000 feet, and the passes are much higher. Sultanabad is over 6,000.

We knew only too well what it meant, for three years before we had been caught in what the Persians call a “kulák,” in the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

mountains between Tehran and the Caspian, and had been snowed up for five nights in a mud hut. We were determined if possible to avoid the repetition of this experience.

Now the Russians have made a road from Tehran to Resht, and when we left Persia in 1900 we drove all the way to the sea ; but until then one had to ride, and to cross a high pass which was under deep snow for months every year. On this pass, the Kharzan, in 1897, we were caught by a sudden snowstorm. Luckily we were close to a village, Mezreh, and able to get shelter, which consisted of a tiny hut just big enough to hold our two camp beds. My maid shared another hut with some hill women. The storm went on steadily for five days and nights, and there we remained until it abated. To go on would have been certain death, and no one would have followed us. Several people lost their lives in the snow the same year. All that is over now. When the Russians have built parapets and widened the road a little in places it will

AN AUTUMN TOUR

be a very good one—like a road in the Alps.

It was a lovely morning as we rode out of Burujird. Everything was hard frozen, but the sky was clear and the sun warm. After climbing for two hours or more our aneroid showed a rise of 2,000 feet, and then stuck and would not act any more. Aneroids are exasperating things, and I take this opportunity of declaring that I will not be responsible for the accuracy of any altitudes I have given. The view over Burujird from this point was very beautiful, the dark coloured town clustering at the foot of the “velvet” hills at the end of the valley, and the great snow mountains towering into the blue sky above it.

Then we had some miles of slush and deep snow, and descended to our camping ground at the valley of Sarinja. We had seen several other villages ; and in fact the whole country, though high, seemed to be cultivated. There was a village, and a few trees, in every fold of the hills, but every thing was under snow and looked dreary.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

At one village which we passed the inhabitants crowded round us, and began to describe how they had been plundered in the troubles which followed the late Shah's death. The Lurs had swept the village clean, they said, with a significant sweep of one palm over the other. Poor people, they seemed very sad.

I had taken the plunge at Zagha, and this evening I went without hesitation into the rooms which our people had secured, in the Sarinja village. It was really a very nice place, the house of the Kedkhudá or village headman, who was most kind and pleasant, as indeed we found almost every one throughout our tour.

There was a small courtyard, full of snow, perhaps six feet deep, and mud rooms all around it, facing inwards. They were built at a considerable height above ground, no doubt on account of the yearly snow and mud. Below our room, which was reached by a ladder, was a stable. Mr. Rennie had a room on the other side of the courtyard, over the doorway, but his

AN AUTUMN TOUR

fireplace smoked badly, and instead of dining there as we had intended we brought him over to our room. The smoke of the wood fires in these village rooms was the most trying thing about them. Sometimes it made one's eyes smart so as to be almost unbearable. The villagers do not seem to mind it at all, but they often have bad eyes, which may be due to the smoke.

Off our room was a kahdán, or granary, where the household kept firewood, and chopped straw for the animals. They strolled through our quarters to get what they wanted.

The room itself had walls of smooth mud with many recesses, and a fireplace at the end. In the recesses were ranged bottles of various shapes, some ordinary European bottles, some Persian flasks with round bodies and thin necks. On the walls were stuck as decorations bright coloured labels, English and Russian, such as the round gilt labels from sugar loaves, the wrappers of Russian candle packets, and small pictures of girls from match boxes.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

The next day was to be our last risky march. It was across very high ground, and we felt that if we got over it safely our troubles were pretty nearly at an end. It was freezing hard when we started, but in the warm Persian sun the road soon got slushy, and we climbed up a considerable height before we got into clean snow again. I do not know what the height was, for our aneroid was in a hopelessly frivolous condition, but our animals evidently felt the rarity of the air. We saw several dead donkeys lying in the snow. They had been overwhelmed, poor little beasts, in the last storm. At one point we found that the mule carrying our small remaining store of wine had fallen into a drift and had been abandoned by the muleteers, who had now become extraordinarily apathetic. Mr. Rennie and the men with us rescued the poor beast, but with some trouble, for the drift was deep, and the mule would not make an effort. At another point my husband's horse, a high bred Arab, fresh from the tents of the Bedouin, who had probably

AN AUTUMN TOUR

never seen high ground, suddenly lurched and fell on his head in the snow. The Persians said he had "dard i dil"—pain in the heart. He soon got up again and seemed little the worse.

After five hours of this we got out of the snow, and very glad we were to do so. Only a few hours after we had passed, the whole range was enveloped in a storm. If it had caught us we might have suffered very severely. However, we were safe.

That night we slept at a place called Tola, which according to the aneroid was about 6,500 feet above the sea. It snowed a little, but we did not mind that. We again had the Khedkhudá's house, or part of it. Our own room smoked fearfully, but was luxuriously furnished. In the niches of the mud wall were two or three small boxes with metal corner clasps, some saucers, and a gaudy Russian teapot and samovar. There were the usual bottles, among which we noticed an empty Pilsener beer bottle, and one of Mrs. Allen's World Hair Restorer. Against the wall was a tiny mirror in a

AN AUTUMN TOUR

wooden frame, perhaps four inches by two.

This room belonged to the Kedkhudá's wife, a very pretty woman, who insisted upon coming next morning and looking in. She pushed open the door and took a deliberate survey, especially of our camp beds, and then apparently satisfied shut the door and walked off.

As a rule these rooms have no glass in the windows, the little panes, if I may so call them, hardly three inches long, being empty. At night heavy wadded cloths are fastened against the windows. The doors are very rough, but shut more or less effectually, one battant having a chain and hook which fastens to a nail in the wall above.

We were very happy as we marched out of Tola next morning. There had been rough weather in the night, and over the mountains behind us we could see a heavy snowstorm, but the sun was out with us. Leaving on our left a curious hill which reminded one of a Sphinx a thousand feet high, we rode in, a long cantering march, to

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Sultanabad. Though fine, it was cold and windy, the snow lying about in patches.

Nothing could have been kinder than our reception here by the Governor of the province, the Fakhr ul Mulk, or Glory of the State. He sent out his son some miles to meet us, and lodged us in sumptuously furnished rooms in his Government house, and did everything he could to make us comfortable. We halted a day at Sultanabad to rest our men and animals, who had only had two days' halt since Dizful, and to see the European community and the famous carpet factories. It was bitterly cold, with a searching wind, and after we had had the pleasure of receiving all the Europeans, eight in number, at lunch, I was cowardly enough to shrink from going out. The Governor had put into our big sitting-room a "kursi" or frame, covered with a quilt, under which was burning a charcoal fire. It was delicious to creep in amongst the cushions, piled round the kursi, and to get one's feet under the quilt. There I read all the afternoon while my husband visited the carpet



A PERSIAN KURSI IN WINTER.
From a Photograph by Sévrogine, Tehran.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

factory, which was shown to him by Mr. Strauss, the manager of Ziegler & Co.

He came back much interested with what he had seen, and impressed with the scale upon which Messrs. Ziegler carry on their operations. Messrs. Hotz & Co. have also an agency here, but the great firm is Ziegler's, who export an immense quantity of carpets. These are not actually made in the factory, but Messrs. Ziegler dye and prepare the wool, and this is issued to the neighbouring villagers, together with carefully printed patterns which are copied in numberless village looms. We saw some of these looms at work. It is curious to think that Europe and America are supplied with carpets from this out of the way place, the bales being carried hundreds of miles on mules before they reach the sea.

Mr. Strauss explained one thing we had never understood. Persian carpets depend for much of their delicate beauty upon the use of white among the colours. In the Sultanabad carpets there is never any white. Mr. Strauss said that the European and

AN AUTUMN TOUR

American markets will have nothing to do with any carpets in which white is used. This seems a great pity. For smoky London one can understand it, but elsewhere surely white is not an impossible thing.

I believe the dyes for these carpets are very simple—indigo, madder, and vine leaves being the only things used. These form exquisite blends. I have a silk rug from Sultanabad in which the olive-green and golden brown are quite delicious.

The fuel used to boil the dye is the little thorny *Rosa persica* which covers the Persian plains. “Wark” the people call it. We saw numbers of mules and donkeys bringing it in to the factory. In Tehran the same thing is used for heating the baking ovens. The plant has a pretty flower, yellow with a purple brown centre. In late spring these flowers are to be seen in myriads all round Tehran.

Mr. Prinz, of Hotz’s firm, gave us some newspapers before we left Sultanabad, and we learned that our son’s regiment was marching on Kimberley with Lord Methuen,

AN AUTUMN TOUR

and that Ladysmith and Kimberley were still holding out.

Here also on the morning of our start we received a second telegram from Mr. Spring Rice. It ran "Pisr i Jenab ali ba Sal oámatt ast," "Your son is well." He was to be wounded twice before the fall of Pretoria, but this we did not know and the telegram was very welcome.

CHAPTER XVII

ON the 7th of December we marched out of Sultanabad feeling at peace with the world. Behind us were the snowstorms on the mountains, and it was cold ; but we were now clear, on a road with supplies and villages, and Tehran was within a week's march. I began to believe that I should really see the Legation again.

Indeed we might have driven in all the way, for the English bank at Tehran have a concession for the road, and are running some carriages along it. But there is nothing more dull and cold than driving long marches in winter, and I am bound to say that at present the road is far from a good one, though it is being rapidly improved by Mr. Rabino, son of the bank manager. In any case I much preferred riding. So we rode some twenty odd miles past the Sultanabad Marsh to a village called

AN AUTUMN TOUR

Ibrahimabad, where the Sartip or Colonel who owned the chief house put us up most hospitably in the new rooms he had lately built. His ladies came to see me in the evening and were most kind, insisting upon my having charcoal and wood and tea, and many dishes of sweets. I could not understand them very well, nor they me, but that did not prevent our getting on excellently. They evidently thought a Feringi woman very amusing, and laughed at me much, but in the frankest and most good-humoured way.

This part of the country was then dominated by a fighting Mujtahid or priest, who seemed to be a man of remarkable character. It reads like a story from the days of the great Abbots in Europe. The Mujtahid was a large landed proprietor, and more than able to hold his own against any one. According to the villagers he could command seven thousand armed men, and habitually rode about with a bodyguard of seventy or a hundred rifles. With the help of his retainers he added field to field and

AN AUTUMN TOUR

village to village—his method being to harry any village which would not submit to him, destroying crops and houses until the owners in despair sold their lands for any price he liked to give. His revenue from his wheat alone was said to be £60,000 a year.

Some years ago, when the Shah's brother, the Zil es Sultan, held the Governorship of Irak, he broke the power of this turbulent priest, who fled to Tehran, and the land had rest. But afterwards he found means to make his peace with the Persian Government, and was allowed to return to his home. "And now," the villagers said, "we cannot sleep at nights because of him." Doubtless since that time he has been again reduced to order; and doubtless the story told by the villagers did not suffer in the telling.

There were great numbers of camels here, carrying grain to Tehran to feed the capital, where the price of grain was very high, and we found them again at our next halting-place, Rajgird. Here there was a telegraph office, and we went to see it in the

AN AUTUMN TOUR

course of our evening walk. The telegraph master was most kind and polite, but the work was carried on under difficulties. We got into the office through a stable, and when there were informed that there was something wrong, as the instrument could not get an answer from anywhere. We found out what was the matter soon afterwards. The grain camels had knocked down numbers of posts, against which they found it agreeable to rub themselves, and the camel drivers, who are always a wild set, had broken up the posts for firewood. The wire was lying in tangled loops all over the plain.

Keeping telegraph lines in working order is a difficult thing in Persia. The great Indo-European telegraph line, which crosses the whole country and carries so many of the telegrams between England and India, has a large staff to look after it, including many Englishmen. This is always in good order, but it needs constant work, especially in winter, when the snow is very troublesome. Other lines are uncertain. All about Tehran the posts are constantly being

AN AUTUMN TOUR

knocked down by camels or other things, and one has to be very careful, especially in the dusk, when riding across country.

On the 9th of December we slept in our tents again. We had done a long march to a place called Julak, which we found to be a very dirty serai, full of camels, which are not agreeable neighbours. There were no real rooms in the serai, and our things had been put into a little alcove in the wall. The camels grumbled, and were generally unpleasant, close to us. We could not stand this, and as it was not really cold we insisted upon having our tents pitched outside.

On the march we had come within sight of home. Shortly after leaving our camp we had caught a glimpse of the Elburz range beyond Tehran, and soon afterwards we came upon an opening in the hills, and almost filling it was the great white cone of Demavend. It was perhaps a hundred and fifty miles away; but it made us feel that we were almost at home again, and we stopped to hail it. In

AN AUTUMN TOUR

the foreground were low grey-green hills, bare or sparsely covered with camel thorn ; then some twenty miles away a purple range ; beyond that a distant blue one ; then the long line of snowy peaks with the great cone towering out above them. It looked very regular and symmetrical. Over the snow was a pale turquoise sky, which deepened gradually into a dark dazzling blue overhead. Right above us, at an immense height, so far as to be almost invisible, an eagle hung motionless. It was a beautiful welcome.

But I remember when I got into camp feeling that it was time we got home. Our stores and wine were exhausted, and our lamps and candlesticks all broken. We were reduced to candles stuck into bottles. Our servants had really become too disreputable for words. All their lambskin kulahs were gone, replaced by Lur caps of black felt, and their clothes were shocking—over two months of rain and hard marching had destroyed all semblance of respectability. They still had their livery in

AN AUTUMN TOUR

their boxes, but their camp clothes were almost in rags.

I think, however, they were rather proud of their new hats. Mr. Rennie's man began the change before we got into the Bakhtian country. He appeared one day in a Bakhtiari cap, and explained that he had met a man wearing it on the road. The two foregathered, and agreed that as Mr. Rennie's man was going into the Bakhtiari country and his friend was going to Tehran they had better exchange.

They have quaint customs about traveling. If a Persian goes on pilgrimage or otherwise to Kerbela or Meshed, he has ever after the word Kerbelai or Meshedi tacked on to his name. Our Ghulams and servants always got brevet rank in the same way for making a journey. The first brevet is "Beg" and the second "Khan." All our servants we noticed called each other So-and-so Beg before we had got half way back to Tehran. I think they were all Khans at the end. There is not apparently any strict rule about the conferment

AN AUTUMN TOUR

of these titles—but you hear them suddenly addressing each other by the new designation, which they evidently value much.

At Julak we saw a curious and not at all pleasing sight—some camels fighting. Their one idea seemed to be to twine their long necks round each other until one managed to get under the other's guard and seize him by the hind leg. Then the other tried to run away kicking. Meanwhile both blew out a foaming bag from their throats and gurgled horribly, and the muleteers beat them both with sticks to encourage them.

On the 10th of December we marched into Kum again, under a cloudless sky, and very glad I was to see the golden dome once more. It was comparatively warm, and we found our tents pitched again in the old place with the river between us and the town. The snowy range was still a hundred miles away to the northward, but in the wonderful crystalline air of Persia we seemed to see every fold and wrinkle of the range, and the Tughlugh mountain just above Tehran looked as if one could almost lay one's hand

AN AUTUMN TOUR

on it. To the right of it was Demavend, the great cone dazzling white from new fallen snow.

Alas, the news we received was not good. Kimberley had not been relieved ; Lord Methuen was wounded ; Ladysmith and Mafeking were still surrounded by the enemy. But there was no bad news of our boy, and with that we tried to be content.

CHAPTER XVIII

WE had only a hundred miles now to march, and though the horses were tired, we were anxious to get in, so we pushed on without a halt, first to Menzerieh and then to Aliabad. There is nothing very remarkable on this road, which has often been described, but I remember two things which struck us.

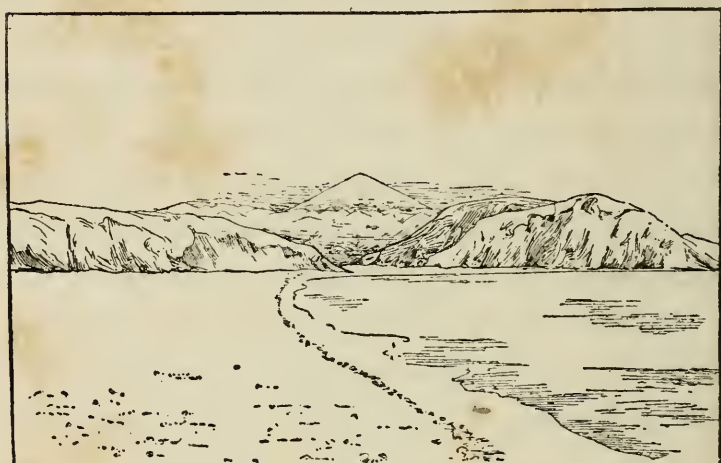
A few miles south of Aliabad we had to skirt the Kum lake—a great sheet of water ten miles broad, swarming with waterfowl. Riding down to the plain which skirts it we came upon a fine view of Demavend. The deep blue of the water, and the yellow of the desert to our left, and the rich red brown of the near hills, and the white cone against the azure sky, made a beautiful picture.

The Kum lake is mainly artificial. It is said that the Persian Prime Minister, wishing to close an old road, diverted the Kum

AN AUTUMN TOUR

stream across it, and flooded the country, thus forcing the caravans to take the new route. The country being a desert this did good rather than harm.

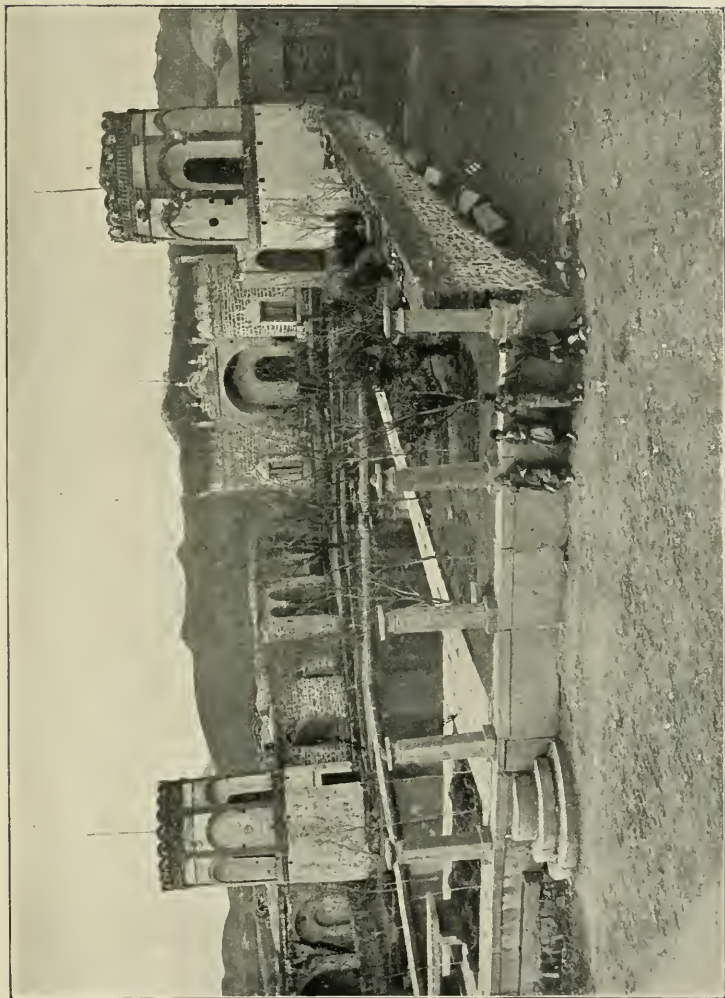
A few miles further on, close to Aliabad, we noticed another curious thing—a long



THE KUM LAKE AND DEMA VEND.

hill with some green outcrop between layers of red earth or rock. Some of the red had fallen across the green in places, and the whole in the bright Persian sky looked just like a band of opal.

On the 13th of December we rode in twenty-eight miles to Hasanabad, where we



GARDEN AT ALIABAD.

From a Photograph by Sévrouguine, Tehran.

AN AUTUMN TOUR

were met by a Legation Ghulam bearing bad news. Our troops had suffered a serious reverse near Stormberg, and Lord Methuen was checked on the Modder River. We were evidently not strong enough for the work before us.

The Ghulam also brought us news that three of our small party of Englishmen in Tehran had been disabled at polo. Two of the three were Mr. Spring Rice and Colonel Picot, of the Legation, who had broken his arm.

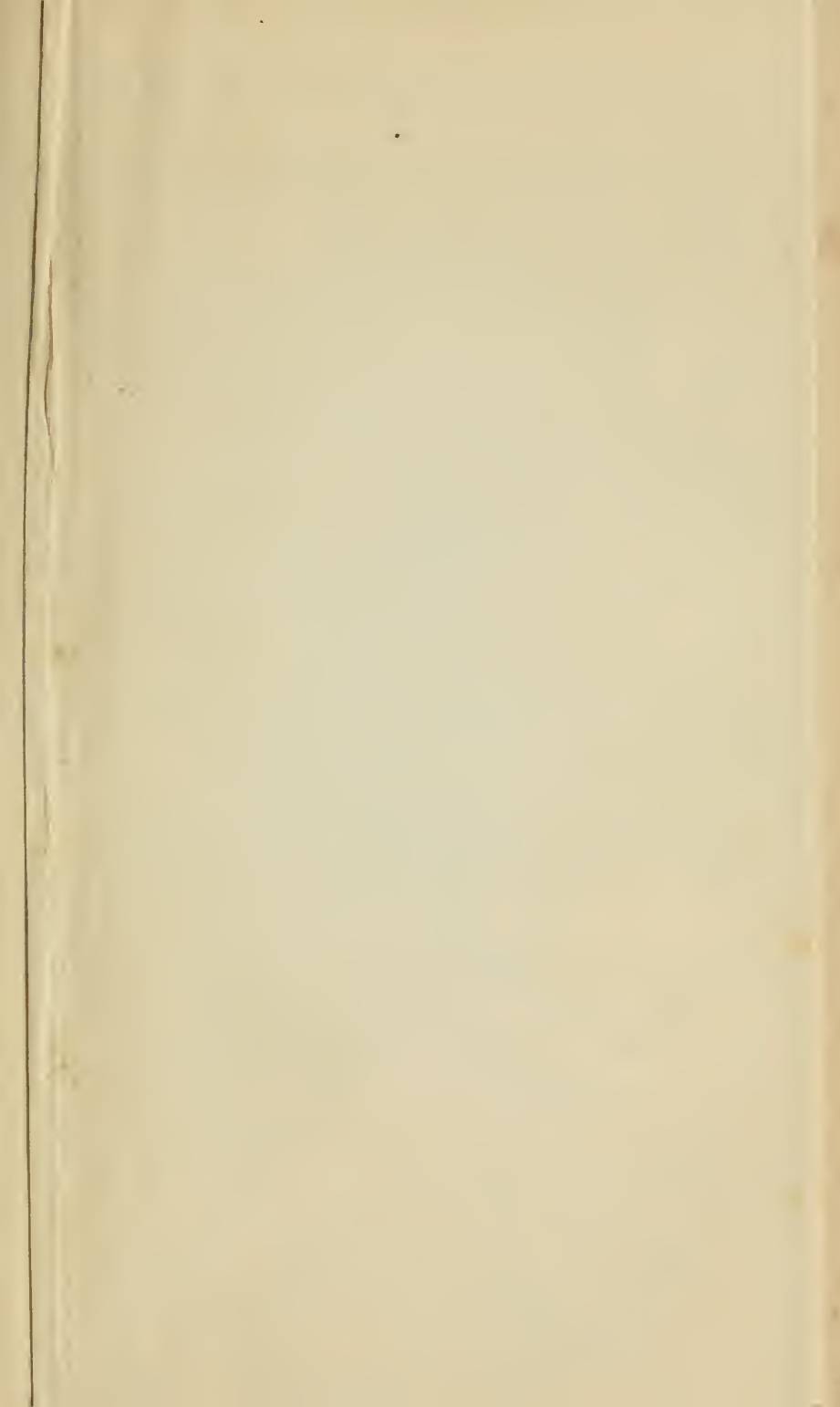
The next day, the 14th of December, a glorious cloudless day, we finished our long journey by a thirty mile march to Tehran. We stopped for breakfast halfway, at Kahrezek, where there is a Belgian beet-root sugar factory, and then cantered on by a good smooth road over the remaining fifteen miles.

We were met at the southern gate of the city by the members of the Legation and other friends, and our rough but pleasant experience was at an end. We had been absent exactly eighty days, during which we

AN AUTUMN TOUR

had marched a little over twelve hundred miles, or at the rate of fifteen miles a day from beginning to end. This does not sound much, but over rough ground it is hard work for the animals ; and I am bound to say that I was heartily glad to be in a clean and comfortable house again, after being so long “kháneh ba dúsh,” with our house on our back, as they say in the East. Above all it was a great relief to be within reach of telegrams, and to know daily something about the progress of the war. The want of news during the time of our absence had been our only real hardship.

I wish I could think the story of our march would be as pleasant to read as it is pleasant to remember.





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INDEX	49
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INDEX TO AUTHORS

-
- ADDISON, JOSEPH, 22.
 'Alien,' 33.
 Allen, Rev. G. C., 42.
 Andom, R., 33.
 Anitchkow, Michael, 3.
 Anon., 3, 33.
 Arber, Professor Edward, 22-25.
 Argyll, Duke of, 33.
 Armstrong, Arthur Coles, 42.
 Arnold, T. W., 3.
 Arnold, Sir Edwin, 45.
 Ascham, Roger, 22, 23.

 BACON, LORD, 23.
 Bain, R. Nisbet, 3.
 Ballin, Mrs. A., 26.
 Bankes, Roden, 26.
 Barmby, Beatrice Helen, 42.
 Barnfield, Richard, 25.
 Bartholomew, J. G., F.R.G.S., 14.
 Bates, Arlo, 33.
 Battersby, Caryl, 42.
 Battye, A. Trevor, F.L.S., 14.
 Baughan, B. E., 42.
 Bayley, Sir Steuart Colvin, 7.
 Beatty, William, M.D., 3.
 Beaumont, Worby, 26.
 Berthet, E., 33.
 Bertram, James, 4.
 Bidder, George, 42.
 Bidder, M., 33.
 Birdwood, Sir George, M.D.,
 K.C.I.E., C.S.I., LL.D., 15.
 Birrell, Augustine, Q.C., M.P., 4.
 Black, C. E. D., 10.
 Blount, Bertram, 26.
 Bonavia, Emmanuel, M.D., 26.
 Boswell, James, 4.
 Bower, Marian, 33.
 Brabant, Arthur Baring, 10.
 Bradley, A. G., 4.
 Brame, J. S. S., 28.
 Bright, Charles, F.R.S.E., 4.
 Bright, Edward Brailston, C.E., 4.
 Brownell, W. C., 20.

 Browning, Robert, 42.
 Bryden, H. A., 33.
 Burroughs, John, 5.

 CAIRNES, CAPT. W. E., 33.
 Campbell, James Dykes, 42.
 Campbell, Lord Archibald, 5.
 Capes, Bernard, 33.
 Carmichael, M., 34.
 Caxton, William, 24.
 'Centurion,' 5.
 Chailley-Bert, J., 5.
 Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. Joseph,
 M.P., D.C.L., LL.D., 5.
 Chambers, R. W., 34.
 Charles, Joseph F., 34.
 Charrington, Charles, 34.
 Coldstream, J. P., 26.
 Cole, Alan S., 20.
 Collins, J. Churton, 5.
 Conway, Sir William Martin, 14.
 Cooper, Bishop Thomas, 25.
 Cooper, E. H., 34.
 Cornish, F. Warre, 34.
 Courtney, W. L., 5.
 Coxon, Ethel, 34.
 Cunynghame, Henry, 20.
 Currie, Maj.-Gen. Fendall, 5.
 Curzon, The Right Hon. George
 N. (Lord Curzon of Kedles-
 ton), 5.

 DALE, T.F. (Stoneclink), 17, 34.
 Daniell, A. E., 20, 31.
 Danvers, Fred. Charles, 7.
 Darnley, Countess of, 34.
 Davidson, Thomas, 6.
 Decker, Thomas, 24.
 Deighton, Kenneth, 6.
 De Bury, Mlle. Blaze, 6.
 Denny, Charles E., 34.
 Dinsmore, Charles A., 6.
 Doughty, Charles, 43.
 Doyle, C. W., 34.
 Dryden, John, 43.

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 Ford, Paul Leicester, 35.
 Fox, Arthur W., 6.
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 Gale, Norman, 43.
 Gall, John, M.A., LL.B., 27.
 Gardner, Edmund, 43.
 Gascoigne, George, 22.
 Gemmer, C. M., 43.
 Glasgow, Ellen, 35.
 Godkin, E. L., 6, 7.
 Goffic, Charles le, 36.
 Gomme, G. Laurence, 7, 36, 37, 47.
 Googe, Barnabe, 23.
 Gosson, Stephen, 22.
 Graham, David, 43.
 Granby, Marchioness of, 20.
 Greene, Robert, M.A., 24.
 Gribble, Francis, 7.
 Guillemard, Dr. F. H. H., 16.
 Gwynn, Paul, 35.
 HABINGTON, WILLIAM, 23.
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 Hewlett, Maurice, 35.
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 Hyde, William, 21.
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 James, King, the First, 23.
 James, William, 8.
 Jardine, Hon. Mr. Justice, 16.
 Johnston, Mary, 35, 36.
 Joy, George, 25.
 KENNEDY, ADMIRAL, 17.
 Kingsley, Charles, 36.
 Knox, John, 24.
 Krehbiel, Henry E., 8.
 LACHAMBRE, HENRI, 15.
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 Leach, A. F., M.A., 8, 27.
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 Leaf, H. M., M.I.E.E., 27.
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 Lewes, Vivian B., 28.
 Loti, Pierre, 36.
 Lover, Samuel, 36.
 Lyly, John, 22.
 Lytton, Lord, 36.
 MACFARLANE, CHARLES, 37.
 MacGeorge, G. W., 8.
 Machuron, Alexis, 15.
 MacIlwaine, Herbert C., 37.
 Macleod, Fiona, 37, 48.
 MacNair, Major J. F. A., 9.
 Machray, Robert, 37.
 Madge, H. D., Rev., 31.
 Marprelate, Martin, 24.
 Mason, A. E. W., 37.
 Masterman, N., 9.
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 McLaws, Lafayette, 37.

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Mills, E. J., 44.
Milton, John, 22.
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Monk of Evesham, A, 23.
Montague, Charles, 39.
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Nesbit, E., 44.
Newberry, Percy E., 10, 21.
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Nisbet, John, 10.
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Ookhtomsky, Prince E., 16.
Oppert, Gustav, 10.
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Palmer, Walter, M.P., 10.
Parker, Nella, 39.
Payne, Will, 39.
Peel, Mrs., 28.
Penrose, Mrs. H. H., 39.
Perks, Mrs. Hartley, 39.
Piatt, John James, 44.
Piatt, Mrs., 44.
Pickering, Sidney, 39.
Pincott, F., 44.
Popowski, Joseph, 10.
Powell, F. York, 42.
Prichard, Hesketh, 16.
Prichard, K. & Hesketh, 39.
Puttenham, George, 23.
- RAIT, R. S., 10, 44, 45.
Raleigh, Sir Walter, 23.
- Reed, Marcus, 39, 58.
Rice, Louis, 10.
Rinder, E. Wingate, 36.
'Rita,' 39.
Roberts, Morley, 16.
Robertson, David, 27.
Robinson, Clement, 24.
Rogers, Alexander, 45.
Rogers, C. J., 28.
Roosevelt, Theodore, 11.
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Russell, W. Clark, 40.
Ryley, Rev. J. Buchanan, 11, 32.
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Schweitzer, Georg, 11.
Scott, Eva, 11.
Scott, Sir Walter, 40.
Scrutton, Percy E., 28.
Selden, John, 22.
Selfe, Rose E., 12.
Setoun, Gabriel, 40.
Shakespeare, William, 45.
Sharp, William, 40.
Siborne, Captain William, 11, 18.
Sichel, Edith, 12.
Sidney, Sir Philip, 22.
Sinclair, May, 40.
Sinclair, Ven. Archdeacon, D.D., 52.
Skrine, J. Huntley, 32, 45.
Slaughter, Frances, 34.
Smith, Edward, 12.
Smith, F. Hopkinson, 40.
Smith, Captain John, 25.
Smythe, A. J., 12.
Sneath, E. Hershey, 12, 32.
Soane, John, 40.
Somervell, Arthur, 48.
Somerville, William, 43.
Spalding, Thomas Alfred, 12, 18.
Spenser, Edmund, 45.
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Stanihurst, Richard, 24.
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| | Wilson, Sarah, 32. |
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| Udall, Nicholas, 23. | Wood, Walter, 13. |
| | YOUNG, ERNEST, 16. |
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| Villiers, George, 22. | |

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